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News. Clues. Kingdom views.

# CHRISTIANCOURIER



## The Tea Party's biggest challenge: protecting its brand

**Carolyn McKinney**

The Tea Party, now a well-known but poorly understood American populist movement, has attracted a great deal of attention because it arose from the grassroots passions of Americans who love their country.

The grassroots nature of the Tea Party is evidenced by the fact that the movement has never been controlled by any one central authority – besides, perhaps, the rule of law and the constitution. This decidedly libertarian-conservative political movement has grown up as a loose network of patriots united around a core set of issues. And around those issues, groups of people act with distinct autonomy based on the will of their members.

Despite this decentralization – or perhaps because of it – the movement has managed to focus the American political conversation on concerns and objectives of lasting importance to the American Republic: overspending, debt and crony capitalism on the one hand, and government accountability, sound money and national sovereignty on the other. But more than that, the Tea Party has sought to restore timeless principles that were once cherished by all Americans: limited government, individual liberty, personal responsibility, free enterprise and equal protection under the law chief among them.

As a populist movement, it is only by remaining decentralized that the Tea Party will continue to unite the passions of Americans and reject the allure of power and



*Politicians such as Michelle Bachmann, the founder of the Tea Party Caucus and Republican presidential hopeful in 2012, are eager to identify themselves with the Tea Party brand.*

influence. Already, it has successfully rebuffed attempts by the Washington and Republican establishments to co-opt the movement for their own purposes. National

principle groups for power.

### Strength or weakness?

This strength, however, is also proving to be its greatest weakness.

groups like Freedom-Works, the Tea Party Express and Tea Party Nation have had limited success tapping the local Tea Party fervor because average Tea Partiers are wary of national groups that compro-

Without a strong central authority or spokesman, it has been difficult for the Tea Party to maintain the purity of its core principles or to stay on track with its original grassroots agenda. Nowhere is this more evident than in its support of federal candidates.

In 2010, not long after the movement began, the Tea Party successfully coalesced around several candidates for Congress, many of whom now serve in government as reliable limited government reformers. However, as the current session continues and the next election approaches, the Tea Party is having trouble both in articulating the same clear mission with which it began and in identifying that mission in the agendas of the current political candidates. Some

candidates now claim association with the movement, but their record shows a clear disparity with Tea Party values. In this way, the decentralized nature of the movement has not been conducive to a critical defence of its brand.

But defence of the brand is critical, and Tea Party patriots must demand that politicians prove themselves worthy of the Tea Party label. That does not mean the candidate can just have a shallow commitment to Tea Party principles, but they must have the political courage to make deep and lasting reforms.

### Walking the talk

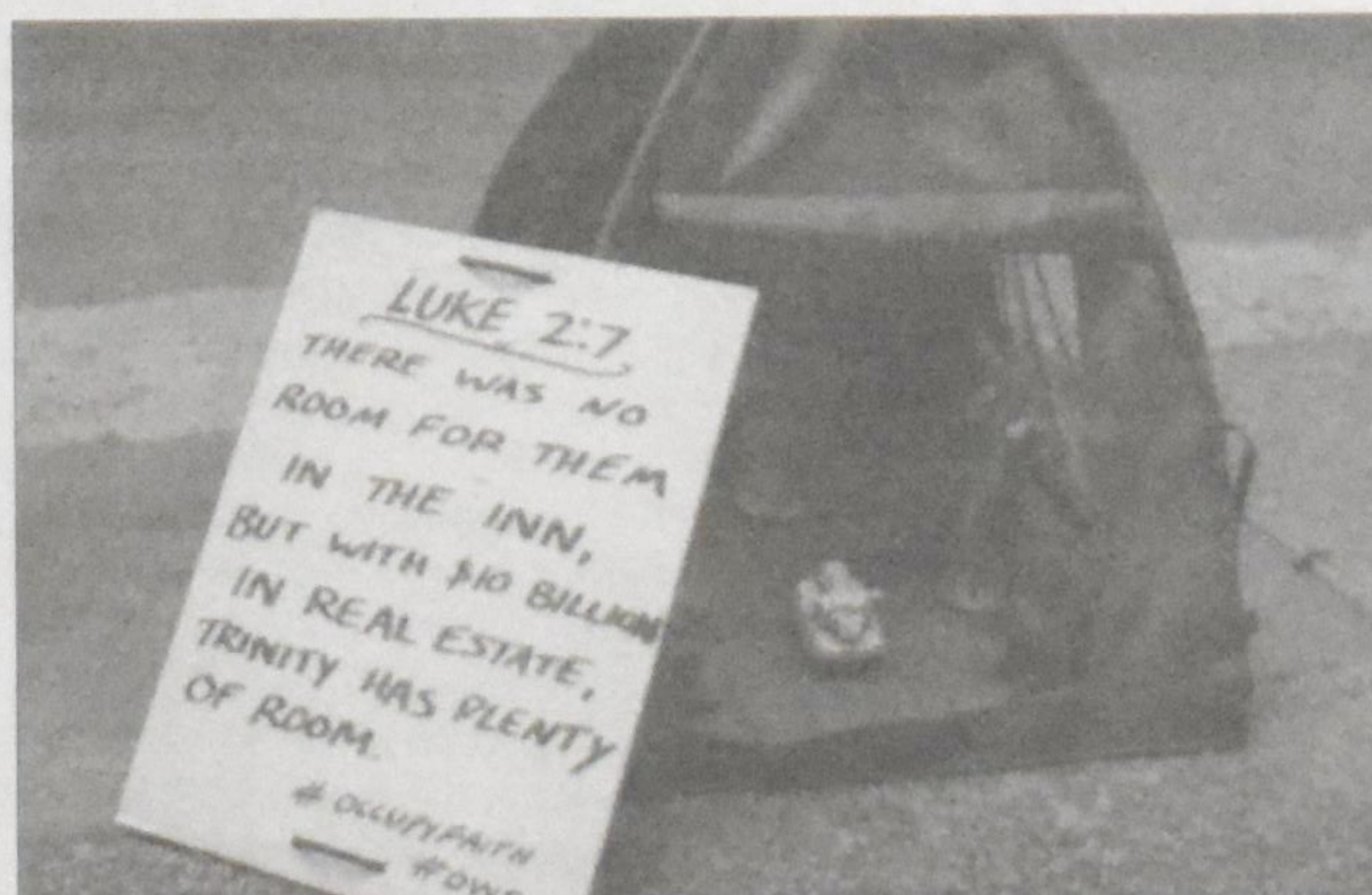
For example, the generic “cut government spending” principle is  
*See Tea Party on page 2*

## Where were you when they crucified my Lord?

**Chris Hedges**

*This article is based on a talk Chris Hedges gave in December 2011 to Occupy Wall Street protesters who were hoping to make use of an open lot owned by Trinity Church in New York. A longer version was originally published on Truthdig.com.*

The Occupy movement is the force that will revitalize traditional Christianity in the United States or signal its moral, social and political irrelevance. The mainstream church, battered by declining numbers and a failure



*Occupy protesters set up this Nativity scene in front of Trinity church.*

to defiantly condemn the crimes and cruelty of the corporate state, as well as a refusal to vigorously attack the charlatans of the Christian right, whose misuse of the Gospel to champion unfettered capitalism, bigotry and imperialism is heretical, has become a marginal force in the life of most Americans, especially the young. Outside the doors of churches, many of which have trouble filling a quarter of the pews on Sundays, struggles a movement, driven largely by young men and women, which has as its unofficial  
*See Where were you on page 2*



## News

Tea Party *continued*

certainly a Tea Party concept, but by which standards will a candidate cut the size of government? Will he or she simply reduce the percentage of the increase in spending by trimming a few line items here or there, or will he or she reduce the size of the budget by eliminating redundant, unnecessary or unconstitutional programs and departments? More importantly, will that budget be balanced without new debt?

Likewise, will a candidate eliminate only those deals with lobbyists and corporate entities that the incumbent has cultivated, or will he or she actually eliminate all cronyism in government and restore the free enterprise system where the market – and not government bureaucrats – picks the winners and losers? Does the candidate have a history of promoting free market capitalism or does he or she have a record of making deals for political gain?

Additionally, if a candidate is promoting a “limited government” approach, does he or she truly understand the federalist system that puts political power in the hands of the people – by putting people in control of their own lives and reserving most of the governing to the states – or will the candidate continue to look for federal one-size-fits-all solutions, or worse, global solutions to the problems facing



*Tea Party supporters must make sure that politicians who endorse the movement actually uphold Tea Party values.*

everyday people? How will the restrictions on federal power in the Constitution weigh his or her decisions, and does his or her record support the campaign rhetoric?

There is still a strong core of Tea Party patriots who are committed to the ideas that defined the Tea Party at its inception, but these people must remain proactive to protect

the Tea Party brand. They must demand that politicians not merely speak about Tea Party issues, but demonstrate a passionate dedication to the ideals of limited government within the federalist system defined by the Constitution. And they must educate new Tea Party patriots on the movement's core principles, communicate and coordinate with all the local groups identifying with the label, and clearly articulate the original Tea Party agenda to the media and the general public so candidates cannot attach themselves to the label when they clearly should not.

Without an active defence of the movement, there is a strong chance that the Tea Party will slowly disintegrate. For without a strong brand and conviction to principle, populist movements cannot remain passionately united for the common cause – and in these times when America needs the Tea Party more than ever, this would be a tragedy. ➤

*Carolyn McKinney is a graduate of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In addition to being a mother of four and small business owner, she is the Chairman of the Republican Liberty Caucus of New Hampshire, an organization dedicated to conservative principles and the cause of liberty.*

Where were you *continued*

credo the Beatitudes:

Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the earth.  
Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for justice,  
for they shall be satisfied.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.  
Blessed are the pure of heart, for they shall see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers,  
for they shall be called sons and daughters of God.  
Blessed are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake,  
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It was the church in Latin America, especially in Central America and Augusto Pinochet's Chile, which provided the physical space, moral support and direction for the opposition to dictatorship. It was the church in East Germany that organized the peaceful opposition marches in Leipzig that would bring down the communist regime in that country. It was the church in Czechoslovakia, and its 90-year-old cardinal, that blessed and defended the Velvet Revolution. It was the church, and especially the African-American church, that made possible the civil rights movements.

And it is the church, especially Trinity Church in New York City with its open park space at Canal and 6th, which can make manifest its commitment to the Gospel and non-violent social change by permitting the Occupy movement to use this empty space, just as churches in other cities that hold unused physical space have a moral imperative to turn them over to Occupy movements. If this nonviolent movement fails, it will eventually be replaced by one that will employ violence. And if it fails it will fail in part because good men and women, especially those in the church, did nothing.

Where is the church now? Where are the clergy? Why do so many church doors remain shut? Why do so many churches refuse to carry out the central mandate of the Christian Gospel and lift up the cross?

Some day they are going to have to answer the question: “Where were you when they crucified my Lord?” At times like these I hear the voices of the saints who went before us. The suffragist Susan B. Anthony, who announced that resistance to tyranny is obedience to God, and the suffragist

Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who said, “The moment we begin to fear the opinions of others and hesitate to tell the truth that is in us, and from motives of policy are silent when we should speak, the divine floods of light and life no longer flow into our souls.” Or Henry David Thoreau, who told us we should be men and women first and subjects afterward, that we should cultivate a respect not for the law but for what is right.

And Frederick Douglass, who warned us: “Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.”

And the great 19th century populist Mary Elizabeth Lease, who thundered: “Wall Street owns the country. It is no longer a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, but a government of Wall Street, by Wall Street and for Wall Street. The great common people of this country are slaves, and monopoly is the master.” And Rabbi Abraham Heschel, who when he was criticized for walking with Martin Luther King on the Sabbath in Selma answered: “I pray with my feet” and who quoted Samuel Johnson, who said: “The opposite of good is not evil. The opposite of good is indifference.”

And Rosa Parks, who defied the segregated bus system and said “the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.” And Philip Berrigan, who said: “If enough Christians follow the Gospel, they can bring any state to its knees.”

And the poet Langston Hughes, who wrote:

What happens to a dream deferred?  
Does it dry up  
Like a raisin in the sun?  
Or fester like a sore –  
And then run?  
Does it stink like rotten meat?  
Or crust and sugar over –  
Like a syrupy sweet?  
Maybe it just sags  
Like a heavy load.  
Or does it explode?

And Martin Luther King, who said: “On some positions, cowardice asks the question, ‘Is it safe?’ Expediency asks the question, ‘Is it politic?’ Vanity asks the question, ‘Is it popular?’ And there comes a time when a true follower of Jesus Christ must take a stand that's neither safe nor politic nor popular but he must take a stand because it is right.”

## Were you there?

Where were you when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there to halt the genocide of Native Americans? Were you there when Sitting Bull died on the cross? Were you there to halt the enslavement of African-Americans? Were you there to halt the mobs that terrorized black men, women and even children with lynching during Jim Crow? Were you there when they persecuted union organizers and Joe Hill died on the cross? Were you there to halt the incarceration of Japanese-Americans in World War II? Were you there to halt Bull Connor's dogs as they were unleashed on civil rights marchers in Birmingham?

Were you there when Martin Luther King died upon the cross? Were you there when Malcolm X died on the cross? Were you there to halt the hate crimes, discrimination and violence against gays, lesbians, bisexuals and those who are transgender? Were you there to halt the abuse and at times enslavement of workers in the farmlands of this country? Were you there to halt the murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent Vietnamese during the war in Vietnam or hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Iraq and Afghanistan? Were you there to halt Israel's saturation bombing of Lebanon and Gaza? Were you there to halt the corporate forces that have left working men and women and the poor in this country bereft of a sustainable income, hope and dignity? Were you there to share your food with your neighbour in Liberty Square? Were you there to become homeless with them?

Where were you when they crucified my Lord?

I know where I was.

Here.

With you. ➤

*Chris Hedges is a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and the author of 11 books. He has spent nearly two decades as a foreign correspondent in Central America, the Middle East, Africa and the Balkans.*





## News

## Christ @ Culture

Lloyd Rang

## Get lost



When I was a kid, I loved to get lost. But it didn't start out that way. The first time I got lost, I was terrified. I was in K-mart, shopping with my mom. I had lingered near the toy section a little too long, and my mom and her bright red shopping cart had moved on. Because I was just little, I couldn't see over the aisles to where she'd gone, and I panicked. Then I remembered something she'd said: "If you ever get lost in a store, tell the cashier and they'll make an announcement. And I will come to the front and find you." So, that's what I did.

Tearfully, I approached the nearest cashier and told her my story. Quickly, she got on the PA and said: "We have a little lost boy here. His name is Lloyd." And just as quickly, my mom came to get me. It was like magic. So the next time we went shopping, the first chance I got I slipped between some coats and into the middle of a circular display rack. I hid there until my mom had left, then bolted straight for the nearest cashier. "We have a little lost boy here," she said. "His name is Lloyd." Man, I loved hearing my name on the PA system. And a new game was born, to my parents' embarrassment.

How times have changed. These days, it's nearly impossible to get lost. Parents nowadays keep much closer tabs on their kids. Heck, they even have leashes for kids now. And I have to admit, it's crossed my mind more than once to buy one. But, even for adults, it's getting really hard to get lost.

Last year, more than one million Global Positioning Systems (GPS) were sold in Canada. That number only includes GPS satellite tracking systems for cars. It doesn't include (for example) the GPS I use to keep track of my running or the GPS systems that are quietly included in most smartphones. So, in my case – unless I've lost my car, my watch and my phone – there's no way for me to get lost, physically speaking.

## Spiritually lost

Now, getting spiritually lost – that's a whole other story. It's easier than ever to get spiritually lost. Getting spiritually lost can happen accidentally, or it can happen intentionally. But it happens a lot.

Like when a promotion catches your eye and you chase it. You work longer hours, work more weekends and miss out on family events. You tell yourself you're doing it for the people you love, but before long you've lost sight of the benefit to the family and are focused on the benefit to your bottom line.

Or, after years of attending the same church, with the same people, with the same pastor, you get bored. Instead of asking what you can do to build your faith community, you begin to ask what your faith community has done for you. You become embittered.

Or, instead of using your free time to enjoy your friends, your family or your hobbies, you spend more and more time online. Farmville becomes more important than the garden. Facebook more important than face-time.

And so on. The interesting thing is, while there may be more opportunities to get spiritually lost in the 21st century, the impulse goes back to the very beginning. There's Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, trying to hide from God. Or Jonah, trying to run away from his responsibility to God. And let's not forget Peter, trying to flee after his denial of God. In each case God confronts them. He finds them. And he brings them back. And – in my opinion – nowhere is this more beautifully expressed than in the story of the Egyptian slave girl, Hagar. As she flees into the desert away from Sarai and Abram, God



With today's GPS technology, it's almost impossible to get physically lost.

finds her. And he sits with her, and asks: "Hagar, servant of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?"

He knows, of course, where she has come from. He knows where she is going, and why. What he wants is for her to confess her reasons for leaving. She tells him her reasons for running away, and they are perfectly reasonable: Sarai has mistreated her and driven her out. But God doesn't rebuke her. Instead, he gives her an even better reason to return: she is called to be the mother of a great nation. And, in the end, she answers that call, does her duty, and returns.

The story is gorgeously told, evocative and full of grace and, at the centre of it, we learn a profound truth about ourselves. We learn that it's human nature to run away from God. For all of us, even believers. Why else would the Bible be full of stories about people who get lost on purpose? And God is obviously ready for our testing. Why else would every single story of a lost soul end with the lost returning to him?

But the really interesting thing – for me, at least – is how much we long to be found. As children of God we long to know that we are special enough, deserving enough, loved enough for him to find us. It's not enough to read the words; we want to experience it, for ourselves. We want to see him, like the father of the Prodigal with his arms outstretched, running down a dirt road with robes flying, giving us a reason to come home.

Sometimes, we get lost by accident. Other times, to test the limits of his love, we set out to deliberately lose ourselves. But every time, he comes to find us. In the ministrations of a friend, in a chance encounter, in a passage read in passing, God finds a way to reach out to us. To call us by our name. To return us, home, to him.

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lives in Bowmanville, Ontario.

CRC mentioned on *The Good Wife*

## Pieter Pereboom

The image begins in black and slowly fades in on the face of a woman sleeping. We hear the voice of a teenage girl anxiously calling for her mother, "Mom, Mom, wake up, I need help Mom!" The mom on the screen wakes with a start.

We are witnessing the opening of Episode 10, Season 3 of *The Good Wife*, which has earned the reputation of being the best-written show on television. The show tells the story of a woman who is trying her best to be a "good wife"



A recent episode of *The Good Wife* mentioned the Christian Reformed Church on major network television. Although this specific reference remains somewhat surprising, the show is generally very willing to deal with our human condition before God.

in our contemporary world. It follows her career as a lawyer, as well as the very public life of her philandering district attorney husband from whom she is currently estranged. The show is very cleverly produced and exceptionally well written.

*The Good Wife* has caught the attention of some of us recently because the episode mentioned above (entitled *Parenting Made Easy*) features a storyline in which a young female Republican English instructor has been let go from her post at a Chicago college for some vague set of reasons. One of the reasons that comes to light in the legal proceedings is that this English instructor takes a dim view of the homosexual lifestyle. Her lawyers, our heroes, leap to her defense under first amendment rights – freedom of religion – because she is,

as she pointedly says, "CRC, Christian Reformed, a member of the Christian Reformed Church of North America."

The episode has caught the attention of the CRC denomination and *The Banner*, for good reason. Outside of a few salted references to the CRC in Paul Schrader's body of work – the odd Calvin College t-shirt or copy of *The Banner* left lying around – I don't believe I have ever seen the CRC directly and clearly referred to in the North American mass media. And it's a difficult reference, picking at one of our "tough issues" as a denomination. On the whole it's negative publicity – we are part of the Christian church that doesn't particularly care about gay people, the church that judges them.

It would be a great pity if this reference was all we were to learn or see in the show regarding faith and the church. But I have been following *The Good Wife* for the past year or so and have been regularly amazed at its willingness to deal with our human condition before God. The struggles of the show's characters living in a big modern city, working at demanding jobs, striving to make relationships work and eking out enough time for family, are pictured at core as religious.

In the episode with the CRC reference, for instance, the characters are all incredibly lonely. They collide and conflict with one another in their work lives and their personal lives. But there is always something "else" going on in every interaction, nothing is ever simple. They are all *striving* and consequently they find themselves profoundly isolated and alone. In all of it there is, I see, a deep yearning for authentic community, a desire for a connection at the level of the spirit in these characters.

In response the show depicts the characters as

searching for something more than contemporary culture has to offer. Unfaithful husbands go to pastors, abandoned teenage daughters search online for modern-day prophets, desperate mothers pray. To me it all speaks profoundly of the need for the church of Jesus Christ in our world; congregations that offer Christ and the body of Christ – community. The question I have of my church and of all of our churches is are we ready and willing to fill the need?

Pieter Pereboom is Lead Pastor at First CRC London. In days long ago he taught film and communications at the University of Western Ontario.



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## Editorials

## In the desert: fleeing



**Brian Bork**

*This article is part of an ongoing series of reflections on the writings of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, a group of third century monks, nuns, hermits and ascetics who sought spiritual wisdom by living in the desert.*

I remember a *Maclean's* interview with a Christian monk from Quebec a few years back. The heyday of this particular monk's monastery had passed, and most of his brothers were elderly, infirm or deceased. He lamented the decline of his community.

A letter from a reader in the next issue expressed joy in the monastery's decline. Finally, wrote the reader, these out-of-touch folks could actually get off their butts, move back to town and make a contribution to our society.

The author of the letter was really in over his head, and probably hadn't availed himself of the rich literature out there describing the monastic life. But his objection is a familiar one. There's a common understanding that the solitude and silence that compose the monastic life are, in fact, little more than an abdication of responsibility to one's neighbour.

Indeed, the stories we have of the earliest Christian monastics – the Desert Fathers and Mothers – might actually encourage such a misconception. The stories tell us of monks like Abba Arsenius, who prayed to God: "Lord, lead me in the way of salvation." And God's response? A voice came to him: "Arsenius, flee from people, and you will be saved."

"Flee from people!" It doesn't get any more antisocial than that, right? It doesn't seem to fit the kind of Christian life we've come to know, one that's necessarily rooted in the community of the church, which at its best yearns to be "one in the Spirit, one in the Lord." Plus, it seems a little sanctimonious for these monks and nuns to have spent their days making holy hay in their austere cells, while the rest



*Abba Arsenius asked God to lead him in the way of salvation, and a voice came to him saying "flee from people and you will be saved."*

of us slog through the cortex-withering moral complexity of everyday 21st century life. I mean, we know we aren't supposed to be of the world – that much is obvious – but aren't we at the very least called to be *in* it? Don't we have some responsibility for it?

### Why flee?

The flight to the desert taken by our ancient brothers and sisters wasn't about giving up responsibility for being in the world. To be sure, they were, in part, fleeing the religious and cultural mediocrity of their day. But it wasn't because they thought themselves above it all, or because they thought their neighbours were unredeemable.

They fled because they knew that in order to live for their neighbour, they had to first take responsibility for themselves. This is why, when it was asked of Abba Macarius: "What does it mean to flee from human company?" he replied, "It means sitting in your cell and weeping for your sins."

The word "your" is critical here. Consider how easily we turn our attention to our neighbour's folly, instead of our own. Or how we compare our shortcomings to those of our friends, in order to make ourselves feel better. Ponder how quickly we project our shortcomings onto them, so that it becomes their fault. Or how, when we know we've done something wrong, we hide out in faulty commiseration with others, especially among those willing to help us rationalize what we've done.

That's what the Desert Fathers and Mothers were fleeing. They recognized how susceptible they were to playing those games. They fled because they knew how destructive those habits were to genuine community, to a life lived out of true concern and responsibility for their neighbours.

### Fleeing to something

Here's a good way to put it: the flight to the desert was less about fleeing from something, and more about fleeing to something. The flight to the desert was a flight to *oneself*. In the desert there was nowhere to hide, no one to compare yourself to and no one else to put the blame on. There was, in the words of Abba Alonius, only "myself and God." And it was there, in that solitude, amid that self-scrutiny, prayer, confession and asceticism, that these monastics became refined into the type of people who were genuinely capable of living with others, in truth and in love.

This might all seem a little extreme. It might seem like they were setting an impossibly high standard for themselves – as if their fear of corruption was so great that they couldn't even bear the thought of working in a culture until they had become perfect. The thing is, though, the more I reflect on the lives of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, the less I'm surprised by their radical call to flee and the more I'm reminded of how little fleeing I do. Their flight is a witness to me, not of a trajectory I need to match, but of a habit that I need to cultivate more and more.

And just because Ontario lacks a desert, doesn't mean I'm out of luck. The witness that comes from the desert tells us that there are many ways to flee. In this deafening age of Twitter, Facebook feeds, relentless text messages and strident cable news pundits, perhaps the most relevant way to flee comes from Macarius, who was asked: "where can I flee beyond the desert?" The old Abba raised a bony finger to his lips, and said "flee that."

Silence.

More on that next time. ✕

*Brian Bork is the CRC chaplain at the University of Waterloo, where he's trying his best to get all these mathematicians and engineers to think theologically. In his spare time he enjoys the rise in blood pressure he gets from hearing the Kop End sing "You'll Never Walk Alone."*

## Thoughts about parenting, or, the unlikely success of a transgressive children's book



**Michael Buma**

"When I see the price you pay / I don't want to grow up" – Tom Waits

If you've browsed through Chapters in the last few months there's a good chance you've noticed a book that's caused a bit of a stir recently. *Go the F--- to Sleep* by Adam Mansbach (with illustrations by Ricardo Cortés) reached number one on the **Amazon.ca** bestseller list in May 2011, a full month before the book was even released. Billed as a "children's book for adults" (no one in their right mind would even think of reading this book to children), *Go the F--- to Sleep* features beautiful recto-verso illustrations in traditional bedtime storybook style, each of which is accompanied by a profanity-laced quatrain imploring an imaginary child listener to go to sleep. For instance:

The cats nestle close to their kittens now.  
The lambs have laid down with the sheep.  
You're cozy and warm in your bed, my dear.  
Please go the f--- to sleep.

There's a point to be made about the language here, and I want to deal with it quickly because this isn't the issue I want to address. (Nor is profanity the most noteworthy thing about the book.) As anyone who pays attention to popular culture will know, the f-word has become utterly ubiquitous in our society and – as a result – has lost a good deal of its shock value. Some of my students don't think twice about using it in class. Whether we like it or not, this is simply how people talk these days. It's also worth noting that the word has moved well beyond its original sexual signification. In modern usage the so-called "f-bomb" is available for deployment as a verb, adverb, adjective, imperative, interjection or noun, and can express a wide range of feelings including frustration, consternation, fear, astonishment, approbation and even delight. While the f-word is still widely considered impolite, bad manners are very different from blasphemy (which, of course, is the subject of the most potent scriptural proscriptions regarding language use). So I don't see much point in getting huffy or indignant about the f-word, as some Christians are wont to do. If we really want to engage and critique culture, which I'd argue that a reformational worldview obliges us to do, Christians can't run for the hills or circle the wagons every time we encounter a bad word.

Rather than getting offended by the profanity of *Go the F--- to Sleep*, then, we should focus on a far more interesting question: why has such a seemingly unlikely book been so incredibly popular?

### Today's parents

My wife Selena and I are the parents of a happy and healthy two-year-old named Logan, and, Lord willing, we will welcome another bundle of joy into our family at the end of the month. We struggled with infertility for three years before Logan's birth, and there's not a day that goes by in which we don't thank God for answering our prayers for children.

But, especially for me, becoming a parent has been difficult too. It's meant cutting back on the things I love, the things that in many ways make me

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Editorial

who I am, and I've had a very hard time doing this. My weekly sports schedule used to include playing volleyball twice, hockey twice and soccer once, and some of this has obviously had to go. Before parenting I had more time for reading, movies, television, video games and hanging out with friends. I could stay up late without consequence, knowing that I wouldn't be woken by a screaming toddler at some uncivilized hour of the morning. And Selena and I had far more time to spend together, the ability to attend social events as a couple and freedom to travel. As usual, Joni Mitchell is right: "Don't it always seem to go / that you don't know what you've got till it's gone?"

All of this illuminates an anxiety I've had about parenting for a long time: the possibility of becoming so wrapped up in my child that I might cease to have an emotional and intellectual life of my own. Don't we all know a few people who lose their personalities upon entering parenthood? Some new parents have little to offer a conversation beyond a stream of mundane updates and anecdotes about junior's progress, pitfalls and proclivities. I've met these ciphers, and I'm terrified of becoming like them.

I'll readily admit that the last two paragraphs sound quite immature, but this is honestly how I feel. And demographically speaking I'm not alone. For various reasons, some chosen and some circumstantial, young people today are delaying traditional rites of passage into adulthood such as establishing independence from parents, getting married and having children of their own. Many young people these days are approaching their 20s as a sort of prolonged adolescence, and when the time finally comes to settle down the burden of responsibility seems to sit heavier on us than earlier generations. One of the archetypes in Jungian psychology is the *puer aeternus* ("eternal boy"), the element of the human psyche that yearns for independence and freedom, dislikes boundaries and limits, and resists permanence and responsibility. It's no coincidence that some sociologists refer to today's young adults as the "Peter Pan generation," which of course is a reference to the most famous literary *puer aeternus*.

It is the *puer aeternus* sensibility of today's young parents to which *Go the F--- to Sleep* primarily appeals. Beyond expressing the common frustrations that parents have presumably always had to deal with, *Go the F--- to Sleep* offers a powerful sense of nostalgia for young parents who don't want to grow up. With its fanciful illustrations and nursery rhyme poetry, the book reminds us of a time not so long ago when our own parents would read us bedtime stories and sing lullabies, a time in which we didn't have to shoulder the burden of responsibility, when all our needs were provided for and our time was structured by a pleasant succession of activities that now appear idyllic (playtime, story-time, naptime, snack-time, etc.).

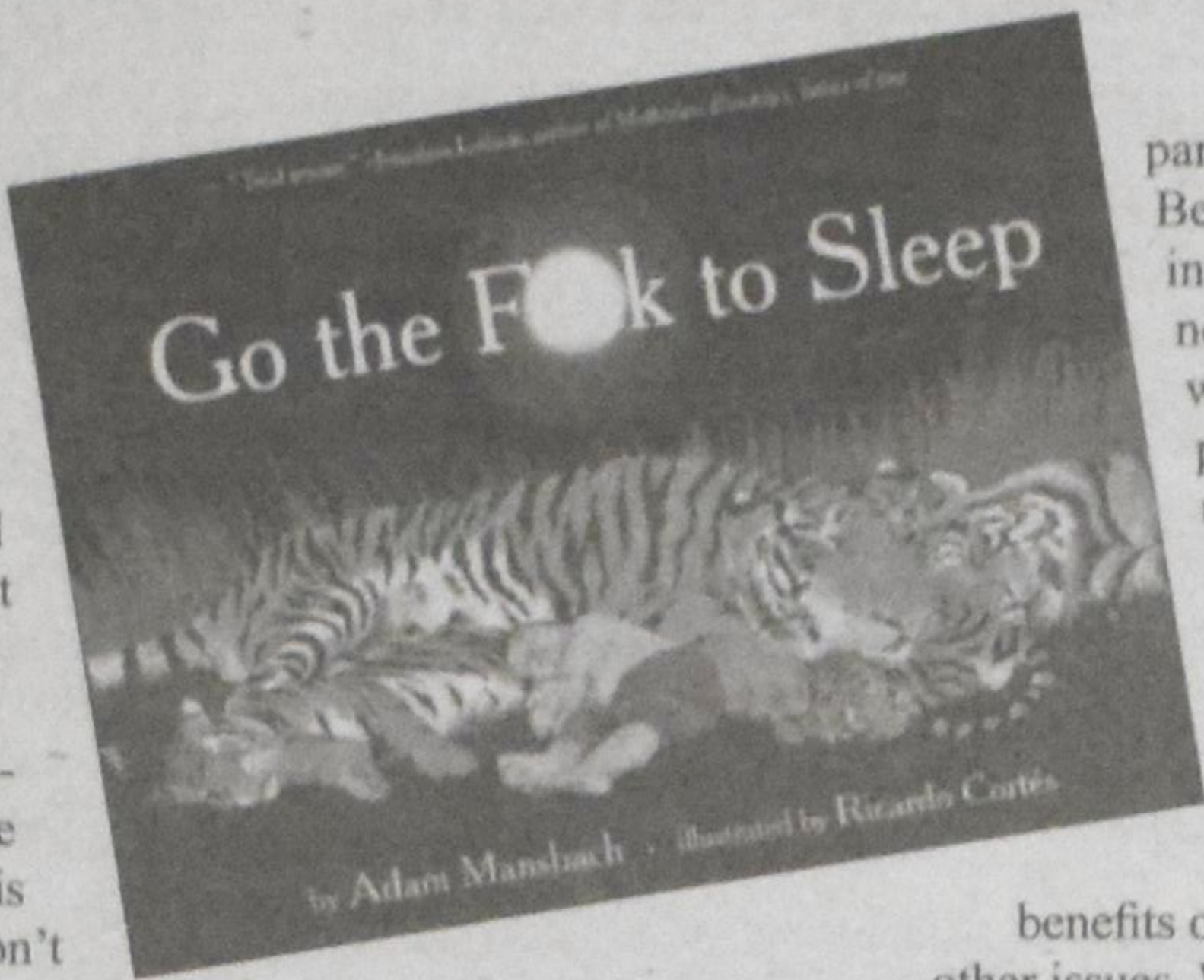
*Go the F--- to Sleep* also appeals to its readers' adult wishes to shirk the burden of responsibility, if only for a minute or two. The premise of the book is obviously quite juvenile, and part of the pleasure it offers readers is to indulge the sublimated desire to be juvenile themselves. Adulthood leaves little room for consequence-free bad behaviour, and *Go the F--- to Sleep* offers the giddy little thrill of feeling immature for a few minutes. It lets us laugh at something that social norms and expectations tell us we're not supposed to laugh at, which for a moment feels liberating and good. Another readerly pleasure offered by *Go the F--- to Sleep* is its promise of a cultural and intellectual life apart from one's child; the parents in the book look forward to watching a movie if their child ever does go to sleep, and this separation is established implicitly as well by the book's not-for-children content.

Finally, and this is perhaps obvious, *Go the F--- to Sleep* offers cathartic release for parents whose children, like mine, have an insatiable appetite for children's books, which by nature are cutesy and saccharin and – especially on the 53rd reading – don't offer much for the adults who are necessarily along for the ride. What a curious indulgence, to find a kid's book that is essentially about us.

God the Father

I hope this doesn't sound overly enthusiastic or supportive of *Go the F--- to Sleep*. I'm not really suggesting people go out and buy the book, just asserting that I understand its appeal. Because what *Go the F--- to Sleep* does is give parents permission to talk about the more difficult aspects of child-rearing. We don't often admit that our kids are a handful, that parenting is difficult, that we miss the freedom we used to enjoy. We feel that if we say these things people will think we're bad parents or that we don't love our kids. Which isn't true at all, and points us toward the complexity and power of what love actually is.

It has become a commonplace, perhaps even a cliché, to claim that becoming a



parent sheds new light on the metaphor of God the Father. But this is true. Becoming a father opened up a new mode of love in my life, one that is intensely rich and deep and has made more fully comprehensible the richness and depth of love which my heavenly Father bears for me. But unless we find the courage to be forthright and honest about the difficulties of parenting, we impoverish both the love we hold for our children and our understanding of the love God holds for us.

Quite simply put, kids can be a massive pain in the butt. They can drive you crazy. Their fits and needs can feel incessant and overwhelming, and there are moments when the crying feels like an emery board running back and forth, back and forth, back and forth across the contours of your brain. I've matched wills with my son over supertime, bedtime, bath-time, the imprudence of eating dirt, the necessity of wearing a winter coat, the

benefits of brushing one's teeth, the need to coexist peacefully with our cat and many other issues. Why is it so difficult for him to trust in my wholehearted commitment to his wellbeing and defer to my superior sense of his best interests?

Perhaps going through these struggles with my son gives me some small sense of how God must feel dealing with us stubborn, grumbling, untrusting and unfaithful humans (whom he still loves dearly, his children). It's both humbling and comforting to think of myself as a beloved, exasperating child in the eyes of my heavenly Father. To use the language of parenting that my own son is just now beginning to understand, it makes me want to be good. That's a simple word, but I mean it in a profoundly thorough, grateful and worshipful way.

Michael Buma teaches in the English and Kinesiology departments at the University of Western Ontario, and is interim editor of the Christian Courier. He loves his son very much, but misses his sleep.



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## News

## Manitoba: Donations for children fill Indian centre after break-in

WINNIPEG, Manitoba (CRCNA) – Donations quickly began streaming into the Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg after the media reported that thieves broke in shortly before Christmas and stole children's books and toys. The thieves climbed a high chain-link fence and broke a window to get into the Christian Reformed Church-supported drop-in centre. Police are still investigating the theft.

Centre director Michele Visser says the centre has experienced a "surprising number" of donations from the public. The donations will not simply save the centre's reading area, but will also help it expand. "The flood of donations has been incredible, and more than we could ask for or imagine. We are very grateful," says Visser.

Located on the north side of Winnipeg, the drop-in centre had been given the toys and books from a country gift shop and boutique to use in a new program for toddlers and children up to age eight. The idea was to set aside an area in the centre where parents could spend time quietly playing with, or reading to, their children.

After news of the theft broke in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and on the CBC, people stopped by the centre with donations. Visser talked with many of them. Some brought in prized possessions and talked about what certain books and toys have meant to them over the years. They also had a chance to learn more about the centre. As a consequence, says Visser, "we have made many new friends and contacts in the area."

### 'It's been amazing'

In an interview with the CBC, Visser said she had no idea why the thieves didn't steal anything but the books and wooden toys, which were in bags in her office. The thieves kicked in the door to get into her office. People have since "come forward to pay for our window and to repair the door. It's been amazing," she says.



Painting by Cree artist Ovide Bighetty reflects mission of centre.

Visser says that they have received so many donations that they will have to build shelves in the area for all of the books and toys. Already she has people who will donate their time to put up the shelves. The centre may also need help from the local public library to sort and catalogue the books. "What was to have been a few books and a comfy chair in the corner will now be a mini-library," Visser says. "We received far beyond what we lost."

Besides many individuals donating, the gift shop and boutique that had first donated the items has since donated more.

About 70 to 100 people come to the centre each day for free phone calls, coffee or help putting together resumes or housing applications. The Indian Family Centre is part of the CRCNA's Aboriginal Ministry in Canada. The centre says it has a vision to "be a Christian healing community which honours and respects Aboriginal understanding of life with its gifts expressed through culture, teachings, governance structures and other aspects of life."

Visser said she got the idea of setting aside the reading area after handing a book to a three-year-old who looked at it and didn't know how to open it. "Reading was such an important part of my childhood," she said.

Located in a separate room in the centre, the play and reading area should be open for use any day now.

Once all of the donations come in, says Visser, any left over will be handed on to other area centres that help those who are in need. "We will share our surplus." ➤

## CRC chaplain excited about university sports ministry

BIG RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Mike Wissink's campus ministry for Christian Reformed Home Missions often occurs in locker rooms, on the sidelines of football fields and basketball courts, and on buses while teams travel to games.

While Wissink also has a traditional campus ministry involving devotions, meetings, services and mission trips, he finds the sports chaplaincy to be especially compelling. He serves the men's and women's basketball teams, the volleyball and soccer teams, and the football team at Ferris State University in Big Rapids, Michigan.



When he was younger, Wissink says, he loved playing sports. That love now combines with his love for God and his ministry among the athletes at Ferris. "I see God at work on the fields and in the locker rooms, and I believe this is where I need to be," he says.

Wissink finds it a privilege to be there to see touchdowns scored, to hear the scrape of sneakers on basketball courts and to smell the heady, if sometimes stale, aroma of achievement and exertion. As he counsels distraught students under the goal posts or prays with them in a dark arena tunnel after a tough game, he always makes sure his ministry is based on Scripture.

"I always ask 'How does God's Word speak to us in every situation?'" he says. "I have found students on the sports teams to be open to looking at the biblical perspective and how it speaks to all of their lives."

When necessary, he remains sensitive to a team's record. If they are going through a losing streak, he sticks close, but keeps a low profile. "I present the gospel, but I need to be sensitive to how a team is doing," he says, because losing streaks affect the players emotionally.

### Planting seeds

Wissink works with athletes who are struggling with challenges in their relationships or performance on the field, on the court or in the classroom. When needed, he is called in to help handle crisis situations, such as a death in the family or some other difficult situation or tragedy. He also attends meetings of the teams and prays with the players in many situations. "It's been very exciting for me. I can plant some seeds even if it is for a short time," says Wissink.

The sports ministry began at Ferris State a few years ago when Wissink, already serving as campus chaplain, was given the opportunity by the men's basketball coach to minister to his team and staff.

Since then, the ministry has expanded, and Wissink is now known as the honorary athletic department chaplain. "The athletic director now asks the coaches to make use of me," he says.

Besides ministering to a diverse group of student athletes, Wissink draws Christian coaches and other staff together for study, encouragement and prayer. He has found that, although he is with students for only a few short years, he maintains ties with many of them, sometimes interacts with them on Facebook and has even officiated at their weddings.

While his niche has become sports ministry, other Home Missions campus chaplains have taken a different focus. Some work intensely with international students; some minister to post-graduate students, staff and faculty; some are deeply involved in giving or sponsoring lectures. "We are all working in communities of believers and we all have the opportunity to engage them and help them grow in their faith," says Wissink. ➤

## Zambia: Christian leaders blast U.S. over link between gay rights, foreign aid

Marian Van Til, with files from CWN, CCO

LUSAKA, Zambia – Zambia's Christian leaders have reacted angrily and with alarm to the United States government's decision to link foreign aid with the promotion of "gay rights."

On Dec. 9, 2011, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said in an address at the United Nations office in Geneva that "gay rights and human rights are one and the same." Clinton stated that the Obama administration "defends the human rights of LGBT [lesbian/gay/bisexual/transvestite] people as part of our comprehensive human rights policy and as a priority of our foreign policy."

In response, Father Paul Samasumo, spokesperson for Zambia's Roman Catholic bishops, said, "Donor aid should not be tied to promoting immorality." And Rev. Gibson Nyirenda, a spokesperson for Pentecostal leaders, asserted, "For us as a nation, we cannot go in that direction because it is indecent and can erode our morals as society. Let's remain a Christian nation by ignoring such assistance." He appealed to the government to ensure that Zambians are protected from immorality even in the face of poverty.

The Zambia Episcopal Conference and Zambia United Christian Action (UCA) also protested the U.S. Government linking its aid money to "ungodly practices" in their land. UCA president Bishop John Jere said it is shocking that the U.S. and several other Western nations are using development aid to coerce poor countries into accepting practices that flout biblical beliefs and traditional norms. "Homosexuality is a sin and as a country we are a Christian nation," he said, "so I don't think we should even spend time to consider it despite pressure from anyone." He called on fellow Zambians to support the UCA's stance, and commended Zambian President Michael Sata for declaring that the nation would be ruled under the Ten Commandments.



### Won't cave to pressure

Echoing the Christian leaders' statements, Given Lubinda, the nation's minister of information, broadcasting and tourism, said that Zambia will not cave in to pressure regarding homosexuality. Minister Lubinda reminded Western nations about the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Accra Agenda of

Action, which guide the development aid distribution and do not mention acceptance of same-sex marriage as the basis for offering aid to the poor nations.

Homosexuality is illegal in many African countries, with some nations enforcing stiff penalties for people who engage in homosexual relationships and practices. The U.S. Government, via Clinton, however, said that a country's cultural or religious traditions and beliefs are "no excuse for discrimination."

U.S. government agencies have been directed to use foreign assistance to protect human rights and advance non-discrimination while working with international organizations to promote gay and lesbian rights. Many aid recipients say that in reality, "non-discrimination" means having to entirely acquiesce to beliefs and lifestyles they find un-Christian and immoral.

Christianity came to what is now Zambia through the efforts of the famous British missionary-doctor, David Livingstone. Currently, 78 percent of the country's 13.5 million people identify as Christian, of which Roman Catholics make up about 40 percent. Muslims, though only one-to-two percent of the population, are making effective inroads, according to recent reports. ➤



## News

## South Koreans curious about 'their' Psalter Hymnal song

Marian Van Til, with files from CRCNA

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — If you are a member of a congregation that uses the *Psalter Hymnal* you may have sung, or at least paged past, No. 229. The tune is haunting — and Korean; the words come from Colossians 1:15-18, 3:1-4, 15-17: "Christ, you are the fullness of God, firstborn of everything. For by you all things were made; you hold them up...."

Did you ever give a thought to how a Korean tune got into the *Psalter Hymnal*? The Korean Broadcasting Company (national television) wondered about it and sent a crew late last year to the American Midwest to find out. They visited the offices of the Christian Reformed Church in North America in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to get the story. The crew interviewed Rev. David Koll about his involvement in helping to include the tune "Arirang" in the 1987 edition of the *Psalter Hymnal*.

Koll was a CRC pastor for many years and is now the director of [pastoral] candidacy for the denomination. In the 1980s he and his wife, Sally, adopted two Korean children whom they named Michael and Sara. They wanted to be sure that their children knew something of their Korean heritage. So they began going to Korean cultural celebrations and other events available to them in the area where they lived in the 1980s.

Michael and Sara are now in their 20s. Both work in accounting and both live in California. (Their father pastored the CRC in Anaheim from 1994-2008.)

The Kolls began to hear "Arirang" and they heard it frequently. "I was really taken by the Korean song and its lament-like,



Eastern melody," Koll says. Most Koreans learn the folk song early and know it from memory. It is so well known that it is considered a kind of unofficial national anthem. Its original text is about love and loss, and begins, "Arirang Mount is my tear-falling hill; so seeking my love, I cannot stay still."

### How are you using our song?

Felix Kwon, one of the TV journalists who visited Grand Rapids, told Koll that many Koreans are interested in the fact that Arirang appears in a hymnal. Kwon's crew is making a documentary that explores how, where and for what purpose, Korean cultural icons such as Arirang have been adapted. Kwon says, "People in Korea have a shared emotional attachment to this song. We want to make sense [of] how this song is being used outside Korea."

As far as the tune's inclusion in the *Psalter Hymnal* goes, Koll says he had the song in mind when the hymnal was being put together in the early- and mid-1980s. He contacted hymnal editor Emily Brink and suggested she look at the tune and consider including it somehow. Brink did look at it, was taken with it, and asked musicologist and hymnal

committee member Bert Polman to prepare an English text for the tune for inclusion in the "Bible Song" section of the *Psalter Hymnal*. Critics agree that Polman's three-stanza adaptation of the Colossians verses weds extremely well with the Korean tune.

Polman now works with the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship (as does Brink) and was formerly a music faculty member at Calvin College and at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, Ontario.

While the South Korean TV team members were in Grand Rapids they were able to

speak with both Brink and Polman.

"Actually, this is the second TV crew that has come for interviews in preparation for a documentary on this use of this quintessential Korean tune and our use of it in an American hymnal," says Brink. In July 2010, a journalist from the Seoul Broadcasting System (SBS) paid a visit. "We were filmed singing it at the Eastern Avenue CRC during [a] Sunday morning service," Brink noted. But "I never heard back about when that might have been broadcast," she says.

## Sistine Chapel sensors record dust, grime, climate changes

THE VATICAN (CCO) — Sensitive electronic monitors installed in the Sistine Chapel have tracked the chapel's accumulation of dust, pollutants and changes in humidity, and those pollutants are endangering the priceless artworks there, *L'Osservatore Romano* reports. *L'Osservatore Romano* is the Holy See's daily newspaper.

The sensors — "long and somewhat disturbing black tubes draped across the 15th-century murals from floor to ceiling" — are part of an ongoing campaign to preserve the works of Michelangelo, Botticelli and Perugino. The sensors were visible on January 6 when the Mass for Epiphany was celebrated in the chapel and televised across Italy.

The monitors have revealed a "harmful buildup of dust and other pollutants," says Antonio Paolucci, director of the Vatican Museums. But despite that, the Pope is determined to avoid limiting the number of visitors to the Sistine Chapel — most noted for its Michelangelo frescoes.

Some four million people visit the museums annually, with the chapel being the highlight — or even the sole aim of the visit — for countless numbers of them. Ticket sales are a big moneymaker for the Vatican. Dust, sweat, humidity and carbon dioxide exhaled by visitors who jam into the chapel to crane their necks to look at the frescoed ceiling often build to unwanted levels.

"We will try to keep it open" without putting a limit on the growing number of visitors to the chapel, "in the conviction that it is possible to do so without risk to the paintings," Paolucci wrote in *L'Osservatore Romano*.

Paolucci, who also is one of Italy's most renowned art restoration experts, said the Vatican is working to give the chapel where popes are elected an "updated and efficient air conditioning system able to ensure the refreshing of the air and the combating of pollutants in both solid and gas forms." The high-tech sensors were installed last year and the monitoring "is a good way along," Paolucci said.

The monitors register temperature and relative humidity at various heights in the chapel, as well as the temperature of the frescoes themselves, dust levels, the concentration of carbon dioxide and the direction and speed of air currents in the cavernous room, he noted.

One surprising result of the study is the finding that many visitors loop back for another look at the chapel during their tour of the sprawling museums, Paolucci said. "You would think that the number of visitors in the celebrated chapel would be equal to those who enter the Vatican Museums," Paolucci said. "Instead, no. They are more. This means that some, after having visited the chapel a first time, return before leaving the museums," he said. "This makes us understand how impracticable and perhaps even inopportune it would be to put a cap on the number" of chapel visitors, Paolucci wrote.

In 1993, an air conditioning system was installed after the conclusion of the restoration of the *Last Judgment*, Michelangelo's masterpiece on one of the chapel's walls, which he painted after his frescoed work on the ceiling.

The chapel, which also features works by Botticelli and Perugino, underwent an ambitious restoration that spanned two decades and ended in the 1990s. Some critics found the cleaning made the colors look too bright for their tastes, but defenders said the restoration removed centuries of accumulated grime and candle smoke, making it possible to marvel at their original vividness.



## U.S.: Senate blocks El Salvador ambassador over gay advocacy

WASHINGTON, D.C. (can) — Last month the U.S. Senate blocked President Obama's appointment of Mari Carmen Aponte as ambassador to El Salvador, citing Aponte's push for homosexual values in the country.

Aponte had been serving as a temporary ambassador since Sept. 2010 and needed Senate approval to continue her tenure which expired at the end of the year. However, in a 49-37 vote on Dec. 12, the Senate rejected an attempt to move forward with her nomination.

Aponte, a Hispanic activist and attorney, drew criticism over her June 28 opinion piece in *La Prensa Grafica*, a newspaper in El Salvador. In her commentary entitled, "For the Elimination of Prejudices Wherever They Exist," Aponte said that "each one of us" has a responsibility to work towards the recognition of "lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights." She called for increased efforts to prevent "negative perceptions" of homosexuality and to work towards a celebration of the "diversity of the Americas."

Several pro-family groups responded by

saying that Aponte had violated international law and rules of diplomacy by attempting to impose new values on the country. According to the Vienna Convention of the U.N. General Assembly, diplomats are obligated to refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of the receiving state.

Multiple Salvadorian groups wrote to the U.S. Congress urging that Aponte be removed for disregarding the country's culture and morality. Same-sex unions are not legally recognized in El Salvador, where more than 50 percent of the population is Catholic. A May 2006 survey published in *La Prensa Grafica* indicated that 80 percent of Salvadorans are opposed to the recognition of homosexual unions.

In considering Aponte's nomination, several U.S. Senators also objected to what they deemed to be unanswered questions about her background.

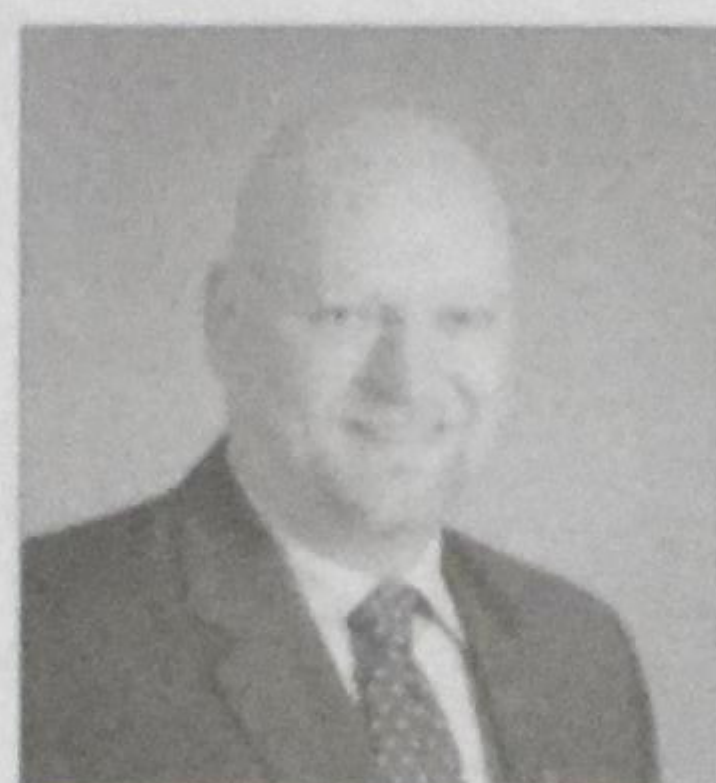
Aponte was first appointed 13 years ago by then-president Bill Clinton, but she withdrew her nomination after rumors surfaced regarding her former live-in boyfriend's connections to Cuban intelligence under Fidel Castro. She was later cleared by the FBI and has received top-secret security clearances multiple times.





## News

## The CRC's Canadian Ministries: A conversation with Bruce Adema



*Bruce Adema is the Christian Reformed Church's Director of Canadian Ministries. In the following interview he talks to CC interim editor Michael Buma about Canadian Ministry programs, the future of the CRC in Canada and ministering to Canada's Aboriginal peoples.*

According to the CRC's Canadian Ministries website, you oversee "a variety of ministries that arise out of Canada's unique experience and history." Could you say a little about these ministries, and perhaps explain some of the unique Canadian context that lies behind them?

The Urban Aboriginal Ministries and the Christian Reformed Centre for Public Dialogue (formerly known as the Committee for Contact with the Government) had their birth in the Council of Christian Reformed Churches in Canada (CCRCC). The spiritual and social needs of many Aboriginal neighbours, and the opportunity to speak respectfully and prophetically to all parties of Parliament were the primary motivations for the founding generation, and they remain important to us today.

Canadian Ministries has continued to grow and develop. A "Justice and Reconciliation Mobilizer" now works to assist churches in understanding and acting on opportunities to be agents of justice seeking reconciliation in our communities. The All Ontario Youth Convention has come under the administrative wing of Canadian Ministries, and almost 900 youth and their leaders attended the most recent event. The CRC's participation in KAIROS is overseen by Canadian Ministries, and through this broad ecumenical initiative many people around the world are blessed.

It's important to maintain the initiatives of Canadian Ministries. Our country has a unique history, laws, values, challenges and opportunities. The CRC needs to be able to speak with its Canadian voice, and shape ministries that have relevance and national impact.

**There's a major focus on social justice among the Canadian Ministries. Where does this come from? Does it reflect the character of the Canadian CRC as a whole?**

The CRC in Canada was formed in its early days by people who experienced great hardship, particularly in the Second World War, but also in the immigration experience before and after the war. They knew what it is to be "the other," to be hungry, afraid and vulnerable. They also knew the gospel's radical call for God's people to feed the hungry, protect the vulnerable, strengthen the weak and share the vision of the Kingdom of God.

The compelling words of Abraham Kuyper that every square inch of creation is claimed by Christ spurred the people of the CRC in Canada on to place a high value on diaconal ministry, and to be engaged in initiatives that sought justice and wholeness in many dimensions. Still today, broadly speaking, the concern for social justice remains a prominent part of the character of the CRC in Canada.

**What are the cultural differences between the Canadian CRC and the American CRC? How do these play out in the Canadian Ministries?**

I believe that the commitment to biblical faithfulness and adherence to the Reformed Creeds and Confessions is a hallmark of the CRC on both sides of the border. Again

speaking in broad generalities, the CRC in the US leans towards an emphasis on pietism (the inner life, personal sanctity) while the CRC in Canada leans towards transformationalism (seeking to make the Kingdom of God manifest in every sphere of human existence and life). Of course, no one should (or would, in my experience) deny the importance of a close walk with the Lord, or of being engaged in making the world look more like the Creator intended; it's a matter of emphasis.

The CRC in the US is largely constituted by folks whose families came to North America several generations ago, while many in the CRC in Canada are either immigrants themselves or have immigrant parents or grandparents.

**What do you see as the direction of the Canadian CRC in general?**

I believe that the best days of the CRC in Canada are still before us. Because of our twin commitment to scriptural obedience and social justice, our youth and our neighbours should see the CRC as an attractive place to call their spiritual home. If we follow the Spirit's leading and resist our Enemy's attempts to divide us with petty squabbles, we will increase in impact on the lives of our members and in our communities. If we continue to value the broad community of faith that we are as the CRC in Canada and say no to secular individualism and its ecclesiastical cousin, congregationalism, we will grow in our reach and impact across Canada and around the world.

The CRC in Canada will enjoy increasing ethnic diversity, growing ecumenical engagement, and have an even larger impact on society.

**The CRC has been doing street-level ministry work among Aboriginal communities in Winnipeg, Regina, and Edmonton for more than 30 years. What particular challenges do these people face, and how do you tailor programs to meet their specific needs?**

The people we serve through these ministries are living in the city and often experiencing stress and hardship. Some struggle with addictions, some are drawn into prostitution. Some have deep questions about the Creator and how he can be known. Our ministry centres offer hospitality, friendship, respect and encouragement through pastoral counselling, spiritual support and help engaging social services.

Each ministry centre is unique and has shaped its program according to the capacities and needs they encounter. But all seek to walk with people on a journey toward wholeness and health (in all its dimensions).

**You began a program in Fall 2011 called "reForming Relationships," which involves a cross country art tour featuring paintings by Cree artist Ovide Bighetty (some of Bighetty's work recently appeared in CC's Christmas issue, Dec. 12, 2011). People don't usually think of an art tour as a ministry program. Why take this unique approach, and what do you hope to accomplish by it?**

The "reForming Relationships" tour uses paintings of the life of Jesus Christ – done by a Cree artist in Woodlands Cree style – as a way of bringing CRC people and Aboriginal neighbours together, so that they can begin (or deepen) relationships. The tour events are helping CRC folks get beyond stereotypes and caricatures about Aboriginal people as they shake their hands and look into their eyes and share their stories. Through this they are learning about Aboriginal issues, and discerning their appropriate response to their neighbours' needs.



*A Sharing Circle group meets at The Indian Family Centre in Winnipeg, one of the CRC's Canadian Ministry programs.*

**One of the CRC's Canadian Ministry programs is involvement in KAIROS, the ecumenical justice organization that recently came to national attention when the Minister for International Cooperation, Bev Oda, apparently altered a memo in such a way as to deny funding for a grant which had already been approved. What has the reaction to this been within KAIROS? Have any programs been directly affected?**

The actions and reactions about this episode were most unfortunate. At its root are misunderstandings. For example, there was confusion about a document entitled "Kairos" which was written by a group of Palestinians. It had no connection to the KAIROS we are part of, but that was the perception, particularly by those in government. Also, KAIROS was accused of advocating for sanctions against Israel, when in fact it had explicitly rejected that as an approach.

With the ending of funding from CIDA, KAIROS has had to adjust some of its programs, and cancel others. Particularly hard hit were those programs that supported women and the poor in developing countries. However, the ministry of KAIROS continues, within the parameters of its resources and corresponding opportunities.

**What are the biggest challenges currently facing the CRC's Canadian Ministries?**

In our denominational structure, we want to be binationally united as well as nationally relevant. Some see efforts to be "really Canadian" as a threat to denominational unity. Others see efforts to be "really CRC" as a capitulation to the American majority. Walking the line between these viewpoints continues to be a challenge.

Society's siren song of individualism, and the temptation to selfishly value receiving over giving, could undercut the church and ministry growth that I hope for and anticipate.

**I imagine you've had some pretty powerful moments interacting with people whose lives are touched by ministry programs. Could you share a "good news" story?**

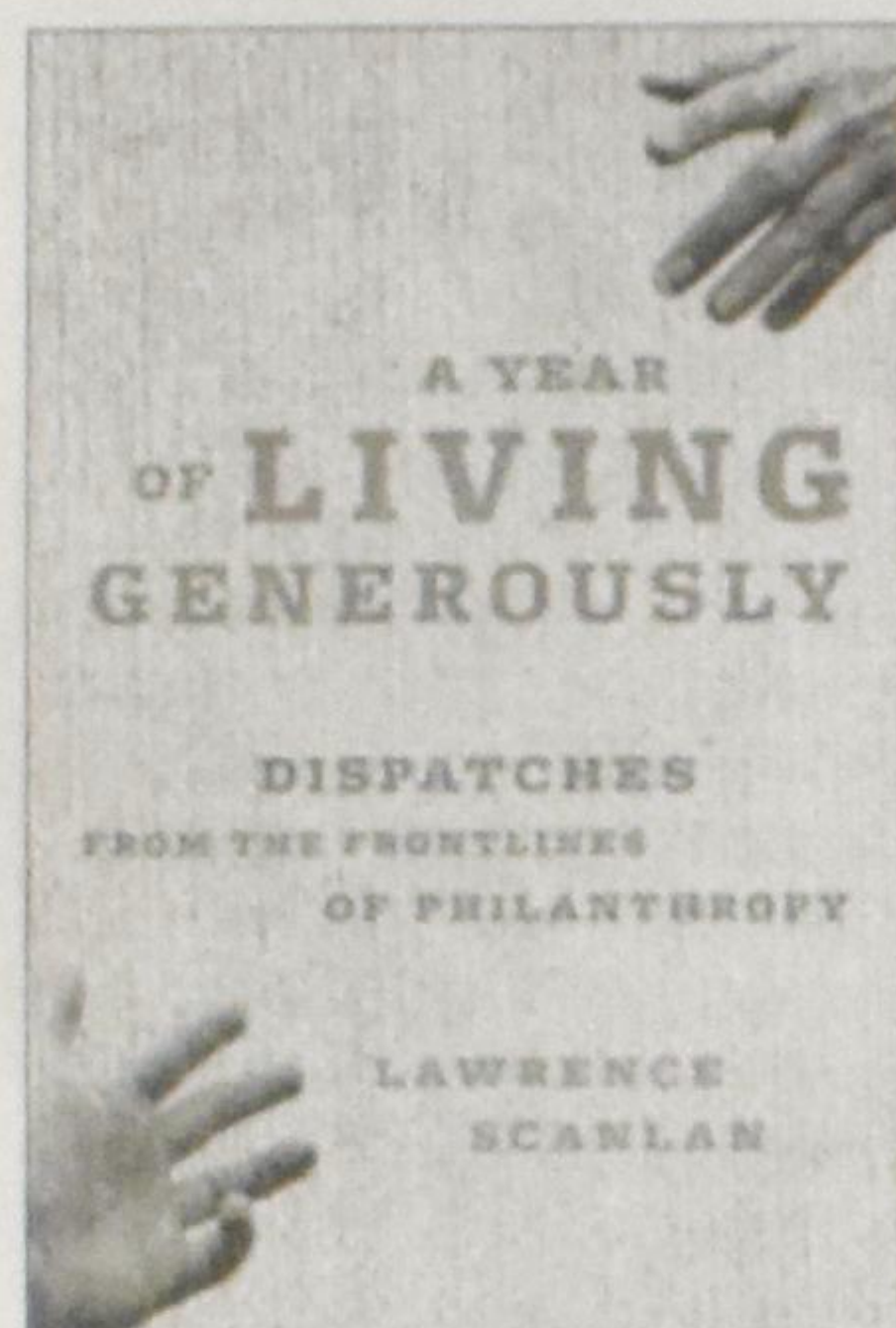
It has long been our dream to see Aboriginal leaders taking ministry positions in the CRC. So it was very encouraging when some Aboriginal folks from the Indian Family Centre community in Winnipeg became part of the Leadership Development Network, an initiative of Christian Reformed Home Missions. As these folks grow deep in understanding the Word and develop their own God-given capacities for spiritual leadership, we can begin to see great steps forward in diversifying our leadership and engaging the Aboriginal community at new and even more profound levels. ➤

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## Reviews



***A Year of Living Generously***  
by Lawrence Scanlan  
Douglas & McIntyre, 2010

## Generous living

Brenda Visser

Can one person make a difference? In his book *A Year of Living Generously: Dispatches from the Front Line of Philanthropy*, Lawrence Scanlan explores the answer to that question. By volunteering and learning with 12 different charitable organizations over the course of one year in a “radical sabbatical,” Scanlan explores issues of generosity and justice among the rich and poor. In the preface Scanlan asks: In the face of suffering, what if any, is my obligation or that of my community and my country? Is it good to be good?

Scanlan documents his time spent with several organizations, such as a drop-in centre, immigration services, prisoner-release services and a hospice in his home city of Kingston, Ontario. He spends a month on the streets in Toronto, and gets involved in environmental advocacy in southwestern Ontario. He teaches a writing class in a Six Nations Reserve. He also volunteers in New Orleans, Costa Rica, and Senegal.

Poverty cannot be disguised, says Scanlan. He sees a pressing need in decent and affordable housing, and acknowledges that the “... gap between being able to pay for lunch at Tim Horton’s and being forced to accept a free lunch at Vinnie’s is perilously thin” (8). He recognizes that where there is need, it is often churches or religious groups who are the on the frontline.

And he takes that thought further with his scathing review of current government practices at all levels that turn a blind eye to social supports and funding. He says that “food banks do a job that governments should rightly be doing itself” (298). Challenging current practices, he writes: “The government won’t pay \$1800 to fluoridate Native water, but will fly out dental emergencies at thirty times the cost” (106). Before the reader becomes comfortable with blame, however, Scanlan also challenges the comfortable middle class – “What if we attended to people the way we attend to our lawns?” (185).

By getting his hands dirty, Scanlan becomes connected with the people he is helping. “Time spent with another tribe,” he writes, “is almost always a good thing. Walls come down, prejudices are shattered, eyes are opened” (83). But at times, he is almost overwhelmed by the needs he sees, and by the incredible obstacles people face. “This too is part of the deal in volunteering. If you open your heart, leave your nerve endings exposed, you will almost certainly end up taking on someone else’s pain” (186).

So is it good to be good? Scanlan thinks so. He explores the science of kindness, quoting from studies that show that compassion registers in the brain’s pleasure zones. A theme of the book comes from one of the first places he volunteered at, which had a poster on the wall stating, “No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.”

I like how Scanlan explores these issues of kindness, social justice and philanthropy. He quotes from several books on these topics, and it is evident that he did a lot of research when putting this book together. I love the dignity and hope he describes when people are active in volunteering with the poor. He says in the conclusion that:

“It’s possible to maintain one’s dignity and sense of humour while confronting one’s own mortality... What I felt most powerfully was anger at the disparity that I witnessed first-hand, gratitude for my own health and good fortune and a conviction that the even a small act of kindness can profoundly affect both giver and receiver... the experience was far richer than I could have hoped for, and I would do it again.” He describes feeling “more compassion, less fear and less self-conscious after these experiences” (304).

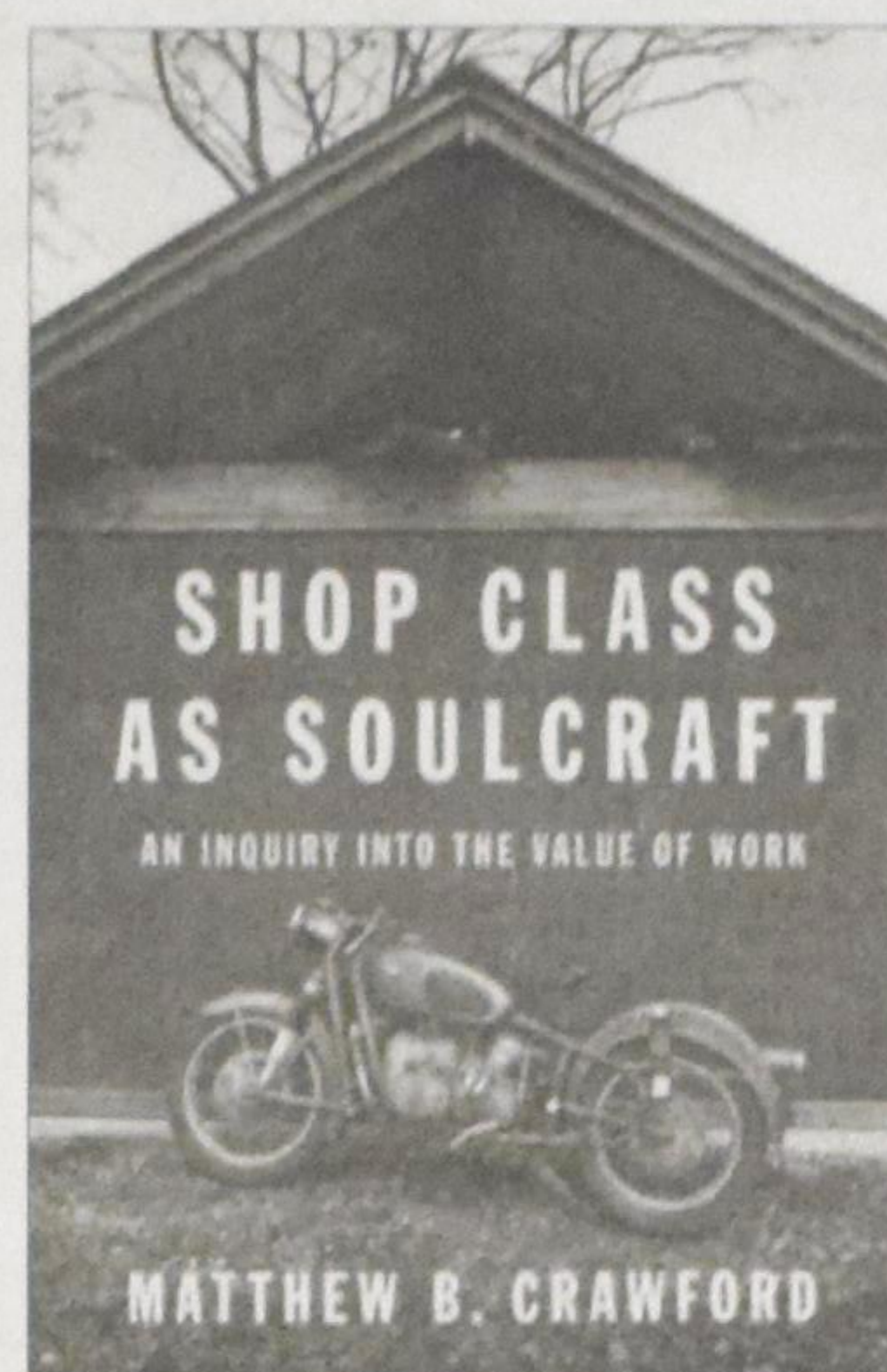
One plus of the book is that the author includes his email address in the conclusion, encouraging readers to write him and engage in the discussion of philanthropy. I had an excellent electronic conversation with Scanlan.

I highly recommend this book; it has lingered with me. While this is not necessarily faith-based writing, I think Christians who wrestle with a real and practical faith will be challenged and encouraged by Scanlan’s book. The story telling alone makes it an appealing read. Better yet, try out volunteering and philanthropy for yourself. It is not likely you will regret it. You really *can* make a difference. ➤

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mother of four and wife of one, lives and writes in Athens, Ontario.



## Political philosophy and the art of motorcycle maintenance



***Shop Class as Soul Craft***  
by Matthew B. Crawford  
Penguin Press, 2009

Nick Schuurman

Think back to high school history class for a second.

During the time of the Industrial Revolution, folks discovered that more products could be produced faster, and at a lower cost, if they were put together not by men and women who had a broad understanding of how the products worked, but by lower-paid individuals who performed only one or two specific tasks all day. And so when Henry Ford first made cars, he went around the countryside looking for the best cart and bicycle craftsmen, whereas today I have friends who couldn’t tell you how to change your car’s oil, but are employed by major automobile corporations fastening the same dozen bolts all day.

Matthew Crawford, addressing this loss of knowledge and craftsmanship, invites readers to think back to high school shop class.

Crawford, like his father, studied physics in university. Along the way, however, he bumped into Plato, braved Greek class and got hooked on the classics. He eventually completed a Ph.D. in

political philosophy at the University of Chicago, and, when he had completed his coursework and dissertation, took on a fellowship and a position with a Washington think-tank.

He lasted five months.

Before he could even make it to the half-year point, he became fed up with the abstractions of his work, the lack of tangible results and with “making arguments about global warming that just happened to coincide with the positions of the oil companies that funded the think-tank.” And so, while he should have been working on publishing his thesis and landing a tenured teaching gig, he abandoned the think-tank, set up shop in a decaying factory and began repairing motorcycles. *Shop Class as Soul Craft* tracks this unlikely path, and lays out the principles which brought him to where he is now.

Shop classes, he explains, were largely eliminated from American classrooms in the 1990s, deemed as too expensive, potentially dangerous and antiquated in light of the booming technology sector. Computer monitors were shipped in, and table saws were packed away in closets.

***A decline in tool use would seem to betoken a shift in our mode of inhabiting the world: more passive and more dependent.***

Only in more recent years has the shop class seen a revival as a fixture in secondary schools. Part of Crawford’s project is to rescue trades (which he refers to as “the useful arts”) from the stigma they’ve come to inherit. For a long time, apprenticing as an electrician or taking over the family farm was seen as something you did if you didn’t cut it academically. Crawford argues that there is in fact an incredible breadth of knowledge, rich intellectual field of play and deep sense of independence and satisfaction in the work of the motorcycle mechanic – something often lost to both the white and blue-collared postmodern.

An odd mixture of memoir, small engine repair manual and philosophy textbook, Crawford’s argument gets a little convoluted and tough to follow along the way. Readers unfamiliar with either the inner workings of exhaust pipes or the philosophical method of Marx and Heidegger (both, in this reviewer’s case), may find they have their work cut out for them. And you’ll have to pardon his French, his polemic is frequently laced with the obscenities of stereotypical shop-talk.

Crawford tries to be as clear as he can that this is not another cry for life as it was “in the good old days,” but rather a diagnosis of something that has been lost, and a suggestion for means by which this satisfaction and vision of human flourishing can be reclaimed.

Rather than functioning as passive consumers of goods, he argues, the development of “hard skills” allows us to become better members of society. And, while he may at times push the argument a little far for our Reformed sensibility (which, after all, celebrates participation in response to the creational mandate in *all* arenas of human activity – the likes of political philosophy and think-tanks included), there is something to be said for what stands to be reclaimed in shop class. ➤

Nick Schuurman (reviews@christiancourier.ca) is CC’s reviews editor.





## Features

## Preparing A Feast Fit for a King

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

My heart raced and my palms began to sweat as I read the job description I had just received. A few months earlier I had agreed to write 15 devotions and other material for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee's 2011 World Hunger Campaign, based on the theme, "A Feast Fit for a King." Now the components of the job were spelled out in detail for me in an e-mail from Kristen Vanderberg, the person in charge of CRWRC's Communications.

In my gut, I recognized an old enemy – fear. How could I write authentically about hunger when I've never gone a day without food? How could I present the problem of world hunger and the urgent need for action in a fresh way when so much has been written about it? How would I know which of CRWRC's relief stories to select from the many I'd been given?

### God's work

Fear and questions can drown out the music of God's grace if we let them. But, on that particular day, I heard the One who calms racing hearts and cools sweaty palms. For several days, the line of a hymn had been playing in my mind. There it was again as I looked at my computer screen – "The work you have for me begun shall by your grace be fully done." I searched online, and discovered that it's a sentence from *With Grateful Heart My Thanks I Bring* (CRC Psalter Hymnal #183). The Holy Spirit was speaking in no uncertain terms. Writing the devotional was one aspect of the work God had begun in me and, by his grace, it would be completed.

Before I fed others with Scripture, stories, and prayers about combatting world hunger, I needed to be fed myself. Writing the devotions became an exciting journey with Jesus, the Bread of Life, who fed me encouragement, ideas, songs, Scripture, energy, and joy.

Being fed involved seeking God's direction and will for the devotional each day through prayer and Bible reading. Thank God, seeking him is not a hit-or-miss affair. It's a sure thing! God said, "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13) and the author

of Lamentations wrote, "The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him" (Lam. 3:25).

How did God nourish my seeking heart in those early morning hours as I prayed for him to help me give shape to the devotional? Once, he sang into my mind a sentence from *For the Gift of God the Spirit* (CRC Psalter Hymnal #416): "He, himself the living Author, wakes to life the sacred Word, reads with us its holy pages and reveals our risen Lord." What a comfort to know that, as I read the Bible and thought about which texts to select, the Holy Spirit was bringing to life God's holy Word within my heart. I was also reassured by Romans 8:26-27: "In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." Knowing that the Holy Spirit was interceding for me in line with God's intentions gave me confidence.

Another morning, I was reminded of Jesus' words, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). Nothing? Yes, nothing! How humbling it was to realize *that!*

### Huge responsibility

Giving spiritual direction to other Christians through the written word is a huge responsibility. Paul, in his letter to Timothy, wrote, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). As I chose Bible passages and incorporated them into the devotions, I understood that I needed to handle them correctly, to present them within their context, and not to manipulate the text to fit what I wanted it to say. The Word of God isn't something to treat lightly or to tamper with. Rather, it is "living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). That is a solemn thought, indeed!

Equally important was the need to handle with care and respect the stories of people assisted by CRWRC in different countries. In order to bring into focus the vast problem of world hunger, readers needed to hear stories of real people who have suffered and overcome obstacles. I had been given so many stories to work with. Which ones would I choose? I prayed about that, too.

The Holy Spirit sparked connections for me between specific stories and Scripture passages. For example, when I read about Esther Lubani and the Paulo village, Malawi, community she lives in, I was reminded of James 1:27a – "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress." As the community development facilitator, Esther helped the village start an orphan nursery school in 2008. For two hours a day, five days a week, 52 children are taught Christian songs, the alphabet, days of the week, and months of the year.

When I read about Ibrahim Etagu, from eastern Uganda, who was once a soldier in the local militia that was formed

to fight rebels, but no longer has a stomach for fighting, I thought of Isaiah 2:4b: "They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks." Because of CRWRC's work, along with its partner the Katakwi Integrated Development Organization, Ibrahim is motivated to become the best farmer that he can be, and to be an example to other farmers.

Esther and Ibrahim weren't the only people I met through the CRWRC's relief stories. I encountered Pretty Mary, a participant in the Patharkmah Food Security Project in Jirang, India, who has received training on growing kitchen gardens. I learned about Grace Swira, the Community Development Facilitator in Chipoka, Malawi, who knows that transforming minds is essential to defeating poverty. Her work to help

women establish savings groups in order to better their lives has empowered them, strengthened family relationships, and transformed their villages. I was introduced to farmers in Kamanzi, Malawi, who are learning new and somewhat daunting methods of farming through participation in CRWRC's Farming God's Way program. They needed to abandon familiar farming techniques that have failed to produce the desired results. Yet, courageously, they did so.

Esther, Ibrahim, Pretty Mary, Grace Swira, the Malawian farmers, and others I wrote about aren't just names written in ink. Each name, each person is valued in God's sight. Writing about them was a privilege that demanded my respect and care for each one.

Preparing *A Feast Fit for a King* was not a solitary endeavour. Each time I completed a week's worth of devotions, I sent them to Kristen Vanderberg. An excellent and encouraging editor, she read what I had written and improved on it. She is one of the gifts God gave to me as I wrote the devotional.

In conclusion, allow me to share my prayer for a hungry world.

Lord of seeds,  
apples, pears, plums,  
quinces, oranges, mangoes,  
endless enumeration of bounty,  
how rich, prolific is your earth.  
Abundant treasures,  
filling stomachs,  
nourishing brains,  
cultivating hearts.  
Seed of the Woman,  
seeded, blooming in us  
through Holy Spirit presence,  
make us fruitful,  
caring for your world,  
nurturing child, man, woman,  
lamenting injustice,  
growing crops of mercy, compassion, love,  
till all are fed –  
not overfed,  
not underfed –  
fed.

### Stir-fried Greens

Submitted by Sarah Zwier, CRWRC-Laos

The Lao people eat a lot of cooked leafy greens and often stir-fry. While this recipe is not exactly Lao, it is similar and might help you appreciate a common staple in the Asian diet.

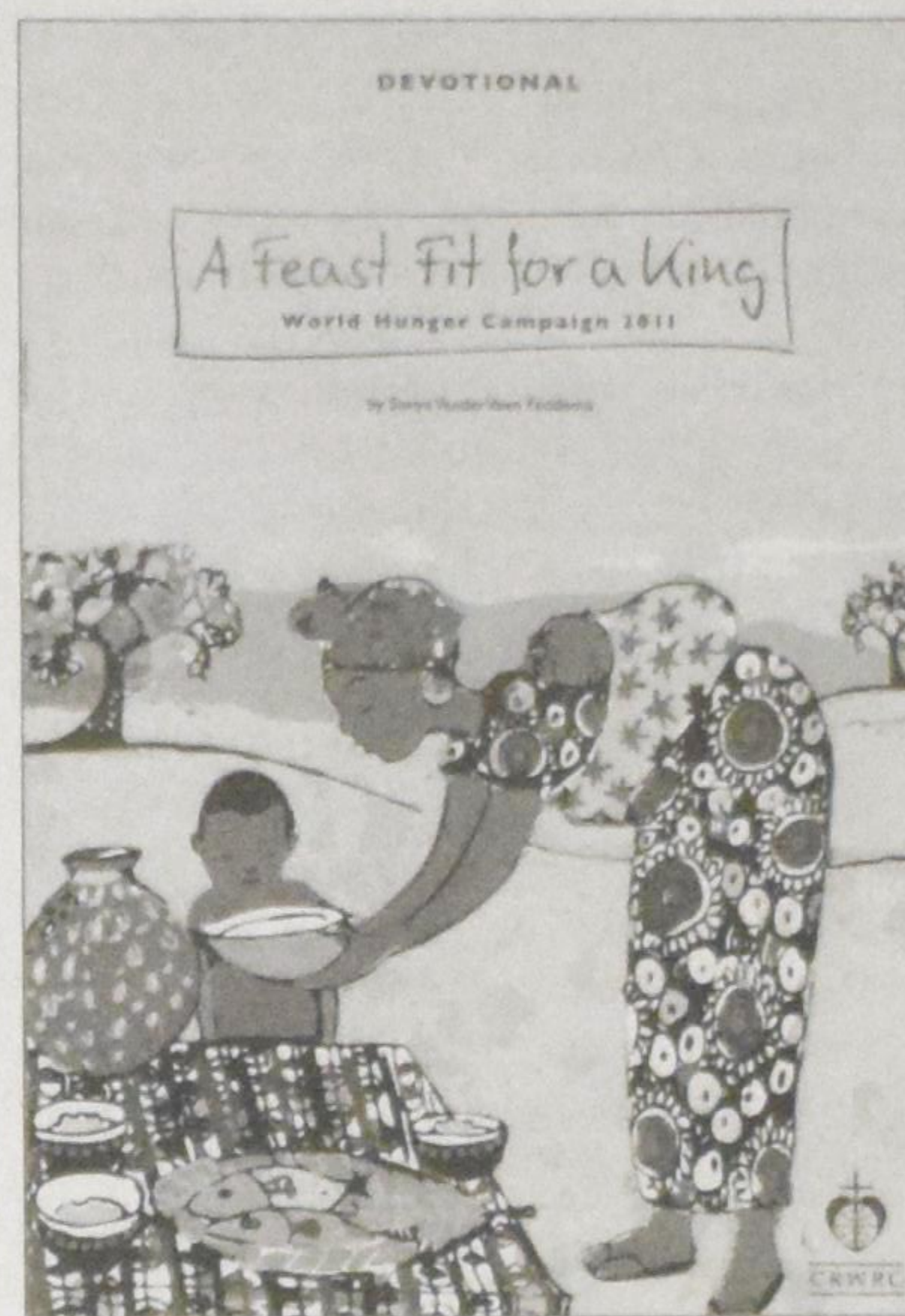
#### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 inch ginger, minced
- 4 cups (160 grams) bok choy (mustard greens or spinach work, too), chopped
- 1½ tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- ½ tablespoon sesame seed oil

#### Directions

1. Cook the garlic and ginger paste over low heat.
2. Add the wet bok choy and turn up the heat to medium.
3. Add the soy and oyster sauce. Stir-fry until the bok choy is soft (just a few minutes).
4. Add the sesame seed oil and turn off the heat.
5. Serve with rice.

Reprinted from CRWRC's *A Feast Fit for a King: World Hunger Campaign 2011* with permission.



Sonya VanderVeen Feddema (sonyavf55@hotmail.com) is a freelance writer living in St. Catharines, Ontario.





## Features

## Finding your story in the Psalms

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

Kevin Adams is senior pastor of Granite Springs Church in Lincoln (Sacramento), California. *Christian Courier* interviewed him to learn about his recently published book, *150: Finding Your Story in the Psalms*.

**How would you describe your book?**

The psalms express the faith of a thousand generations. Every day this ancient prayer book is used by Jewish feminists in New York's Greenwich Village and fourth generation Dakota ranchers driving F-150s. George Herbert, a sixteenth-century British court poet, and Kanye West, a rapper from the gritty streets of Chicago,

are just two of the many people who have reworked psalms to express their own hopes and fears. Over the years the psalms have been prayed with equal vigour by a monk chanting in a chilly medieval German cloister (Martin Luther), an orphaned teen in Communist Poland (Karl Wojtyla, who would become Pope John Paul II), and a Pakistani pastor in a half-built church who struggles to give his congregation a voice in a culture dominated by Islam.

My book tells stories of people who treasured the psalms and people who prayed them by accident, or only in emergencies. It has stories of religious insiders and outsiders, those who fit in church and those who think they don't.

**You chose eleven different psalms to explore in your book. Why did you select these particular eleven out of the one hundred and fifty possibilities?**

I chose some because they are the favourites of multiple generations, others to give a sense of the wide range of emotions and dialogue expressed in the psalms – to show what Calvin meant when he called them “the anatomy of the human soul.” Narrowing down the choices was difficult. It already makes me think about writing a sequel.

**What inspired you to write your book?**

I grew up with the psalms. Still, our congregation, like many others over the years, set aside the psalms for more hip music. Over time, we realized our mistake and came to see again how both spiritual novices and veterans find their hearts' fears, longings and agony best expressed in the Psalter.

When Sept. 11, 2001 happened, we had only two songs in our congregational repertoire that could function as laments. We were liturgically impoverished. Now we feel rich.

**Explain the role a Worship Renewal Grant from the Calvin Institute for Christian Worship played in bringing your book to fruition.**

The Calvin Institute for Christian Worship gave our congregation a grant for scripture memory. The idea was to have every piece of the Bible “spoken,” not read, during the worship service – even the pastor's text! It's a practice we still use today (except for long Old Testament narrative texts). We soon found ourselves wanting to memorize the psalms. Several years later, with a second grant, we spent a year in the Psalter. Along with inviting people to listen to sermons and study the psalms in small groups, we encouraged them to create their own “psalm experiments.”

One young mom, whose husband was away on a nine-month assignment in the United Arab Emirates, began reading psalms to her children each evening. The psalm images so captured them that when they missed a night of reading her children insisted on reading two the next night.

She also began a second experiment, reading the psalms by herself. At first they stretched her. Soon, she wanted to quit. Gradually, she found herself struck by the psalmists' honesty. Lacking any sense of restraint, they told God he wasn't doing his job right. Such honest critique, she said, felt “foreign” and “hard to read,” but also “freeing.”

After experiencing the psalms in worship and at home, several congregation members encouraged me to put some of the psalm-stories we heard into print.

**What do you hope your readers will gain?**

I hope readers will enter or re-enter the psalms' special brand of earthy, bone-rattling, candid prayer. I hope they'll see each story as an invitation to see the psalms fresh again or for the very first time through the messy and muddled lives of famous and ordinary people, and infamous and godly men and women who've loved and prayed them. And I hope they'll follow their lead and bring these well-loved and well-tested prayers into their daily experience, to use the psalms as scaffolding for their own lives.

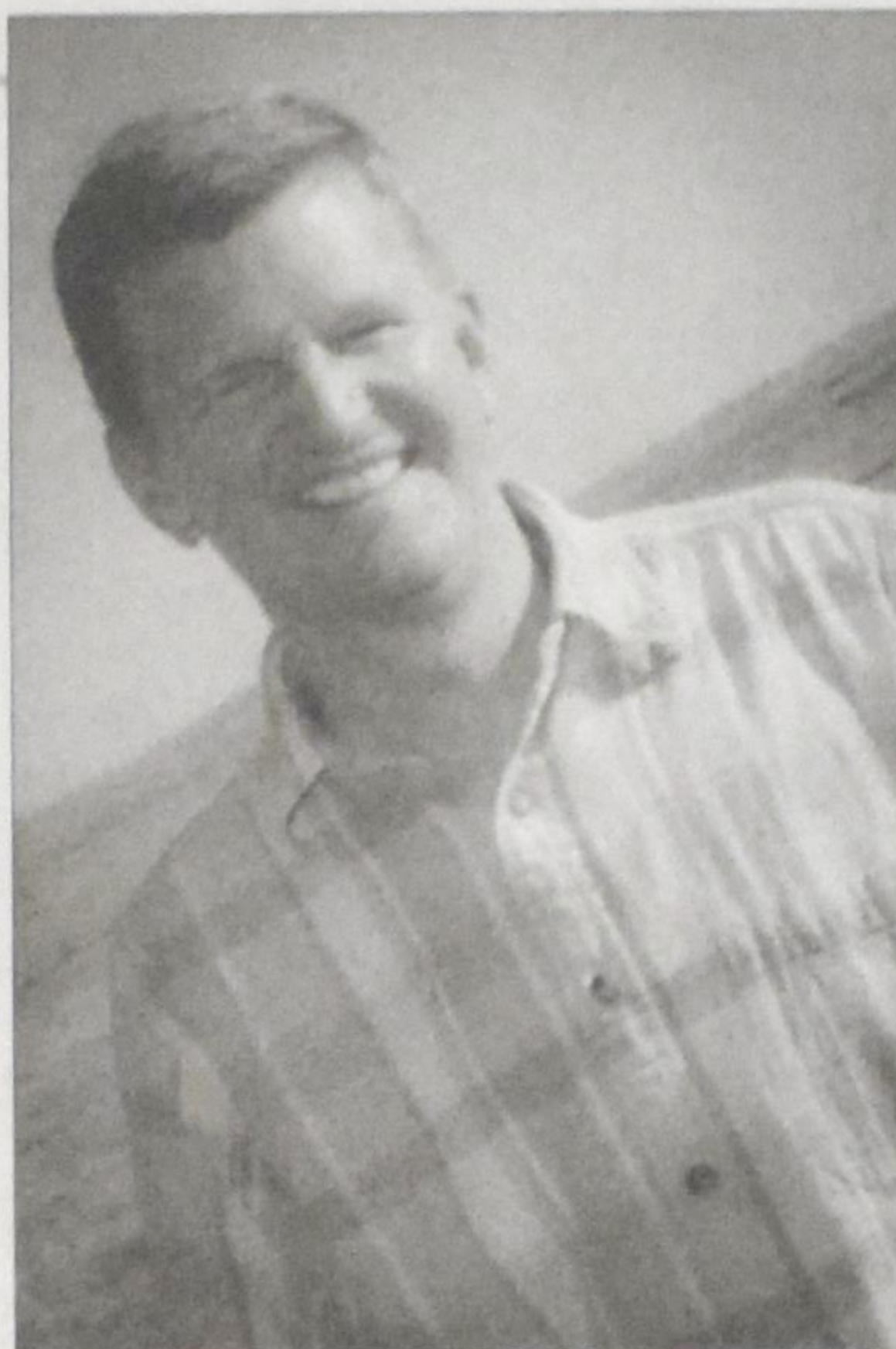
Hearing the psalms through people's stories, I hope readers will find the family of faith is bigger than they imagine. There's room, far more than most of us dream. In the particular faith and doubt, the particular trust and chaos of these particular people, I hope readers will find themselves.

**What is your favorite psalm? How have you found your story in it?**

My favorite psalm is usually the one I read last. If you push me, I'll say my favorite is Psalm 139. My grandmother read it every time we had Sunday dinner with her. I value it because within a single psalm the psalmist beseeches with heartfelt piety, whispers gratitude, offers insightful psychological introspection, bellows a vindictive harangue against enemies, and ends with a touching prayer. Now, that's a psalm! Whatever our continent, generation, mood or level of faith, psalms promise to stir and nourish our soul.



Psalm 139: Wonderfully Made Acrylic on Canvas by Melanie Pyke ([melpyke.com](http://melpyke.com)).



Rev. Kevin Adams invites *Christian Courier* readers to check out his blog at [psalmstory.com](http://psalmstory.com) and contribute to his ongoing research on the psalms.

**Do you have a role model who excelled at finding his or her story in the psalms?**

During grade school, my two younger brothers and I would occasionally stay overnight at Grandma's house. On one stay I awoke earlier than my brothers and descended the stairs. I must have been especially quiet because I found Grandma in her rocking chair gazing out her favorite window. A Dutch version of the Genevan Psalms was in her lap, and she was singing softly. Decades later, I can still remember the serene look on her face. As far as I can remember, no one in my church or family told me I

ought to pray; they simply did so, and expected their faith to take hold in me. I'm grateful it did. In their praying and singing, I met Jesus. So, I owe Grandma and the rest of my family a great debt.

**How have the psalms helped you in your ministry?**

Just yesterday a retired couple called the church and left a message for me. The husband's son, a single man in his thirties, had been killed by a hit-and-run driver the night before. The husband, an articulate and self-sufficient California retiree, only comes to church on Christmas and Easter – and when the senior ministry has good food. I'll never forget the haunting look on his face when he answered the door.

After listening to the circumstances – stories about the son, the tangle of ex-spouses and touchy familial situations that only compounded his grief – I asked if we could pray together. I began with the words of Psalm 130. Then I went on to pray for the man and his family. I had the sense, as Thomas Merton said, that when we pray the psalms we can be sure the Holy Spirit is praying with us. After all, they are his words.

**You will be one of the speakers at the Calvin Symposium on Worship from Jan. 26-28, 2012, at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Briefly describe what you will present.**

The main session I'll lead is called “Psalms for the Unbaptized.” I'll tell stories about and by those outside the church – the faraway and those who can't seem to find the door despite their best efforts. Part of our church's story has been to help folks uninitiated to the faith “see” how the psalms help them, how in that ancient language they can find honest prayer. We'll look at several principles we have found helpful in making the at-times unfamiliar images of the psalms resonate with spiritual novices.

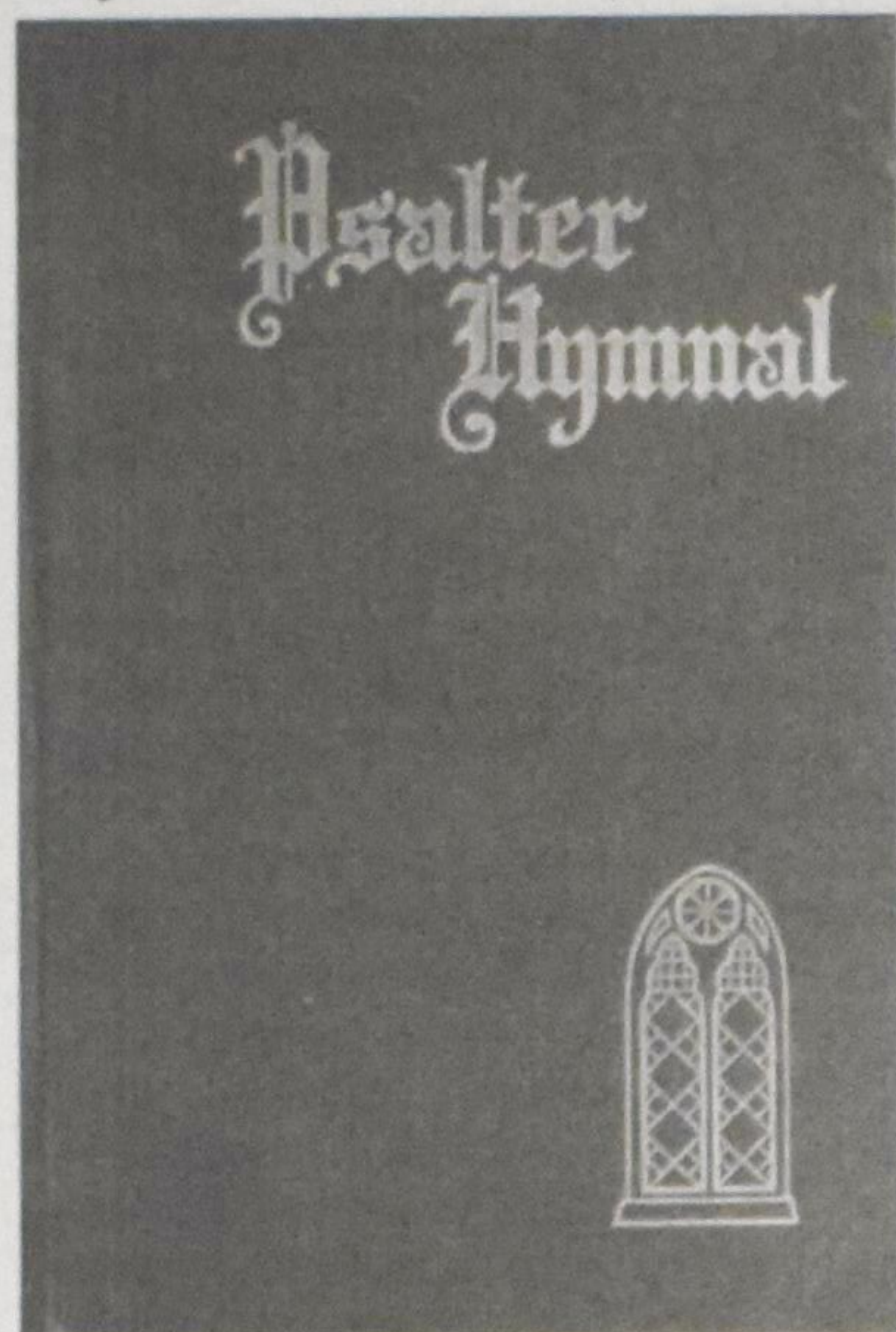
In addition, I'll interview noted psalm-scholar Walter Brueggemann about the roles psalms play in congregational life. Also, I'll participate in several panel discussions, including one called “Rethinking Christian Community and Worship in a Global and Post-Modern Context.”

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## Features

## Why a new hymnal?



Psalter Hymnal published in 1959. Many remember this version fondly.

## Rev. Joyce Borger

"Why a new hymnal?" is the question I am often asked – to which I respond that we are not the same church we were 25 or so years ago when the hymnals most of us are using came out. In the past 25 years the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church in America have become much more diverse; the world has come to our pew and we have worked hard at making room for people from various cultures. While we have made room, we also need to become a family. One way to do that is to learn each other's songs, to give voice to each other's prayers and praises, to join together in harmony.

Hymnals tend to have about a 20 to 25-year shelf-life after which they lose some of their relevance. If we think back on the past 25 years, so much has changed. While the gospel message is the same, the cultural environment

is different. Each generation has its own nuances on the gospel where one part of the message seems to gain prominence for a time. The songs of God's people need to reflect some of these changes and by adding those newly-written songs to our repertoire, we find that in the end we have a broader expression of the gospel message.

We have been richly blessed by an abundance of newly-written hymns and contemporary praise songs as well as newly-learned songs from the global church.

Faith Alive Christian Resources, the publisher for the Christian Reformed Church and the resource provider for the Reformed Church in America, began asking the question, back in 2003, with a small group of folks from both denominations, whether or not it was time for a new hymnal, and given the trend towards song projection, would there still be a need. Our conversations with others in the church and by way of various surveys all supported the decision to move forward with a new hymnal. Another factor was the success of *Sing! a new creation*, a smaller hymnal project that is widely used in both denominations and beyond.

## Moving forward cooperatively

Ultimately, Faith Alive decided to produce a new comprehensive hymnal for both denominations because there are growing opportunities for our denominations to worship together and work cooperatively and a hymnal would be a good way to reflect our common faith. This hymnal is financed through Faith Alive, with some financial support from the RCA, based on projected sales, and does not receive allocated ministry shares as did previous hymnals produced for the Christian Reformed Church.

An editorial committee was appointed consisting of 13 members, five members each from the CRC and RCA, as well as three staff members. These individuals were chosen, not just for their knowledge and experience, but, in particular, because they are known for their love and commitment to each denomination and for their understanding of the growing diversity of each church. While diversity of musical expression, cultural background, ethnicity, gender and age are all evident in the editorial committee, there was no way that 13 people could adequately express the worship needs of two denominations. So a group of 80 advisory members was created, 40 from each denomination. Throughout the process, decisions have been sent to this group for review, and advice sought on particular songs and texts.

## Basic principles

Once the committees were in place, the work began of deciding what should go in the hymnal and how it should be organized. Two basic principles guided our work. The first arises from the common theological confessional commitments of our two denominations. In the mind-boggling array of music available to the church today, which songs reflect the biblical and theological commitments of our shared Reformed heritage? One enormous service this hymnal will perform is to provide a wide array of songs and hymns that can be confidently sung in Reformed churches.

The second guiding principle was to honour the wide variety of musical expressions found in our congregations today. Our churches resound with a broad spectrum of music, from majestic hymns to rhythmic gospel songs to rock tempo praise songs. That means that in the hymnal there needs to be room for *His Eye is on the Sparrow* and *Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise*, for *Here I Am to Worship* and *Amid the Thronging Worshipers*, for *Jesus Love Me* and *Pédon, Señor*. While it was easy to come to agreement on that principle in theory, it was much harder in practice. It meant giving up a song that we might have liked to have in the hymnal to make room for another song that we might not "like" as much, but know to be an important expression of faith for someone else. It also meant expanding the number of selections to about 800 hymns and songs, and reducing other elements found in past hymnals.

While always having in mind the diversity of faith expressions in our churches, we asked our advisory committee to tell us their congregational and denominational "heart songs." What are those songs that your church knows "by heart"? What songs do they turn to in times of crisis or times of praise? What songs are chosen at baptisms, professions of faith and funerals? As we made decisions, we continued to keep this list in mind making sure that these songs were flagged as *heart songs* in our database. It made saying "no" to any one of them that much harder.

But our questioning didn't stop there. We also asked, "What songs are missing?" What words are congregations searching for, wanting to sing but can't find a song

for? What laments and joys go unvoiced in our congregational worship? And then, thinking ahead, we asked, "What songs are our congregations going to need to sustain them over the next 20 or so years?"

## Harmony and rhythm, traditional and contemporary

Along the way we learned many things, but two things stand out. First, we cannot judge all genres of songs with the same criteria. The harmonic nature of the traditional hymn is what makes it interesting, whereas in contemporary music rhythmic vitality is what gives it life. While in traditional hymns we shun the word "I" as being too individualistic, we find that for the African-American community the word "I" is understood as a communal "I." The list can go on. And, while we might prefer one genre over another, when we allow ourselves to join in the songs of another community or culture we are the stronger for it. Ultimately the creation of the hymnal was an exercise in hospitality and grace. We were reminded again and again that this is not our hymnal, but the hymnal of the church.

Second, we soon discovered that we can never say "No one sings this song anymore" or "Everyone knows this song." "No one" and "everyone" should never be used in a conversation related to congregational singing because there will always be significant exceptions.

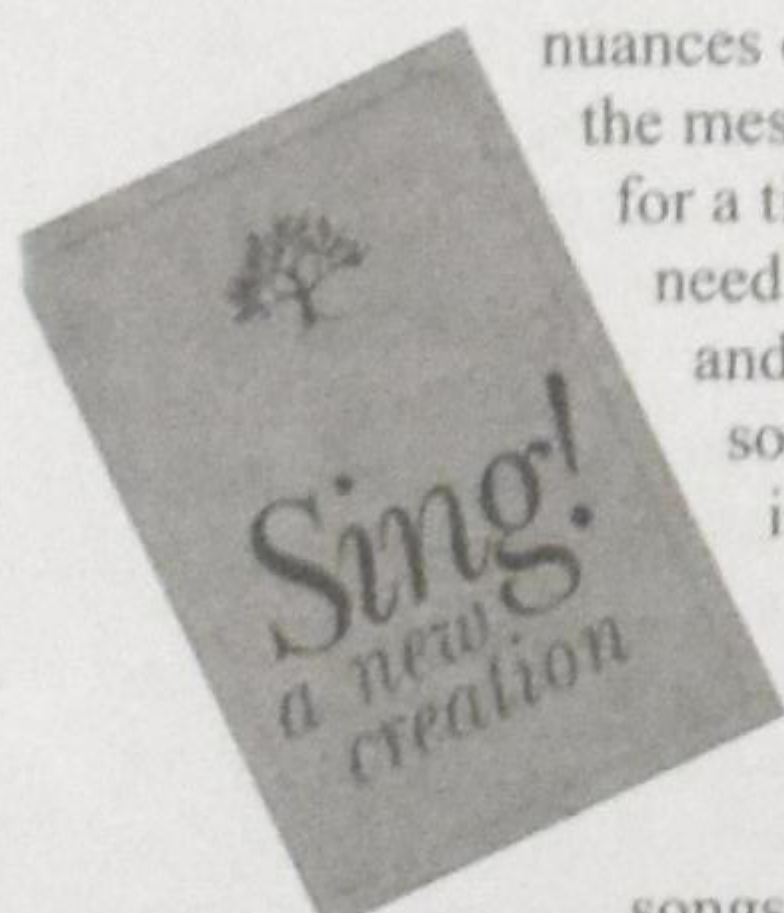
## Lift Up Your Hearts

PSALMS, HYMNS, AND SPIRITUAL SONGS

So what will you find in *Lift Up Your Hearts*? You will find a good many songs you already know and love. Given that each congregation has approximately 200 songs in their repertoire, with 800 songs in this hymnal you will easily find 100 you know well, another 50 you are familiar with, a new group of 50 you are eager to learn, and many more to pull from for specific occasions and to stretch your congregation. The first half of the book will follow God's story of how God created the world, our fall into sin and God's redemptive plan, following Christ's life through to the new creation. The second half of the book is based on the traditional order of worship. You will find the over 200 psalm settings evident in each section of the book. There will be litanies, prayers and readings sprinkled throughout based on the liturgies, confessions, creeds and testimonies of our denominations. And there will be a robust index of themes and scripture references in the back as well as musical indexes related to song names and meters. Finally, we continue to work toward providing an online companion to this hymnal which would include access to electronic files for as much of the hymnal as possible.

A hymnal sampler has been sent out to each congregation in the CRC and RCA. For more information on the hymnal, including an updated list of songs, check out the hymnal's website [liftupyourheartshymnal.org](http://liftupyourheartshymnal.org). Finally, please contact the hymnal editor with any questions or concerns not sufficiently addressed on the website at [hymnal@crcna.org](mailto:hymnal@crcna.org) or by calling Rev. Joyce Borger at 616-224-0763.

Rev. Joyce Borger is worship and music editor at Faith Alive Christian Resources and editor of the quarterly journal, *Reformed Worship*, and of the new hymnal, *Lift Up Your Hearts*. She also serves as a liaison between Faith Alive and the Worship Institute and is a regular presenter at CICW events.





## Columns

## Intangible Things

Heidi Vander Slikke



## Stepping into the New Year

My father had enormous bunions. My mother had a twisted set of hammer toes. I inherited the perfect storm. A chiropodist once told me that I was destined for trouble with my feet from the day I took my first step. The only thing that surprised her was that I was in my fifties before the significant pain set in.

I had bunions already as a teenager. But a few years ago my feet began to feel as if my socks were scrunched up under my toes, even when I was barefoot. Then the pain in my toes and across the balls of my feet intensified. My big toes started to head in opposite directions from each other and two of the toes on my left foot crippled up. Buying shoes was a chore. Wearing them was torture.

Finally I met with an orthopaedic surgeon. The minute I uncovered my left foot he said, "I can see that would cause you serious pain." He gently held my deformed size nine wide in his hands and examined it as if it had glass slipper potential. But he sounded more like Bob the Builder than Prince Charming. "I can fix it," he proclaimed. And with that he proceeded to describe in detail how and what he would cut, saw, break, reset, pin and screw into place.



The surgeon sounded like Bob the Builder. "I can fix it," he proclaimed.

I listened wide-eyed, wondering if he might be testing my resolve to go through with the procedure. I pictured him in surgical scrubs with a tool belt strapped on, hammer, chisel and power drill at the ready. It would take three months to fully heal.

"Can you do both feet at once?" I asked, figuring a two for one recovery period would be a good deal. He agreed.

Considering our farming schedule, it seemed November, December and January would be the best time for me to be swept off my feet. So it was nearly a year later when his office called to say that a date was available for the operation.

The morning of my surgery I looked at my ugly feet and wondered if reconstructing them was worth it. I had heard tales of excruciating post-op pain and I had great difficulty imagining myself as disabled for three whole months. But it was too late to back out.

## No power tools in sight

My daughter-in-law Willene, a nurse, accompanied me to the hospital. The last thing I remembered before the anaesthetic took effect was the smiling face of my surgeon.

"How are you this morning?" he asked.

"Fine," I said. *No power tools in sight* I thought, and passed out.

I woke up two hours later, completely numb in my left leg from the knee down. I had received a nerve block to alleviate the pain. They fitted me with a pair of special sandals that strapped on over the thick bandages. By the end of the day Willene was able to bring me home. She and Jack nursed me through the first night.

For the next two weeks Jack and the family looked after me. Willene and my daughters cooked, ran errands and tidied the house. Jack assumed my non-household chores, did the laundry and became my personal chauffeur. (He referred to it as "driving Miss Daisy.") Mom and Dad brought meals on wheels and picked up groceries for us. Daniel (age three) entertained me by bringing toys to my bed and playing with me. Friends and family visited and did favours for us, great and small.

Tasks like dressing myself, negotiating the stairs, or doing the groceries became milestone achievements for me. I had always thought of myself as a strong person. I believed God expected me to help others. Truth be told, I had unwittingly developed the attitude that health, strength and independence were my God-given rights. Relying so heavily on the kindness of others was both humbling and gratifying.

A month after surgery the bruises, sutures and pins are all gone. I no longer need pain medication. I've made remarkable progress and the surgeon is pleased with the healing so far. The swelling persists – my feet look like balloons with toes. But the bulging bunions are gone and the gnarly toes are mostly straight again. Life has returned to semi-normal. My activities are limited, but every week brings improvement.

I look forward to the day I can wear my own shoes again and take Rocky for a walk around the farm. In the meantime, as I step into the New Year, I'll try to put my best foot forward – remembering to be thankful for good health, the love and support of family and friends, and a God who has taught me that being able to graciously accept help is just as important as being willing to give it.

Heidi Vander Slikke (hmvanderslikke@hotmail.com) lives in Harriston, Ontario.

## Artful Eye



Lake Erie. Photo by Marianne VanderSpek.

## AFTER THE HOLIDAYS,

the house settles back into itself, wrapped up in silence, a robe around its shoulders. Nothing is roasting in the oven or cooling on the countertops. No presents are waiting to be wrapped, no cards fill the mouth of the mailbox. All is calm, all is bright, sunlight glinting off snow. No eggnog, no yule log, no letters to be licked and stamped. No more butter cookies, no more fudge, just miles to go on the treadmill, another round plate added to the weight machine. All our good intentions pave the road. We stride out into the new year, resolute to become firm, to define our muscles, to tighten our borders. The thin tinsel of the new moon hangs in the dark sky, a comma dividing the sentence between last year's troubles and this year's hopes. The calendar ruffles her pages, a deck of shiny cards, deals out a fresh new hand.

Barbara Crooker

Reprinted with permission. This poem originally appeared in Windhover.



Barbara Crooker (barbaracrooker.com) is a poet living in Fogelsville, Pennsylvania. Her latest book is called *More* (C & R Press, 2010).



Marianne VanderSpek is a photographer and farmer living near Florence, Ont. She attends Dresden CRC.



## Columns

## Principalities &amp; Powers

David Koyzis

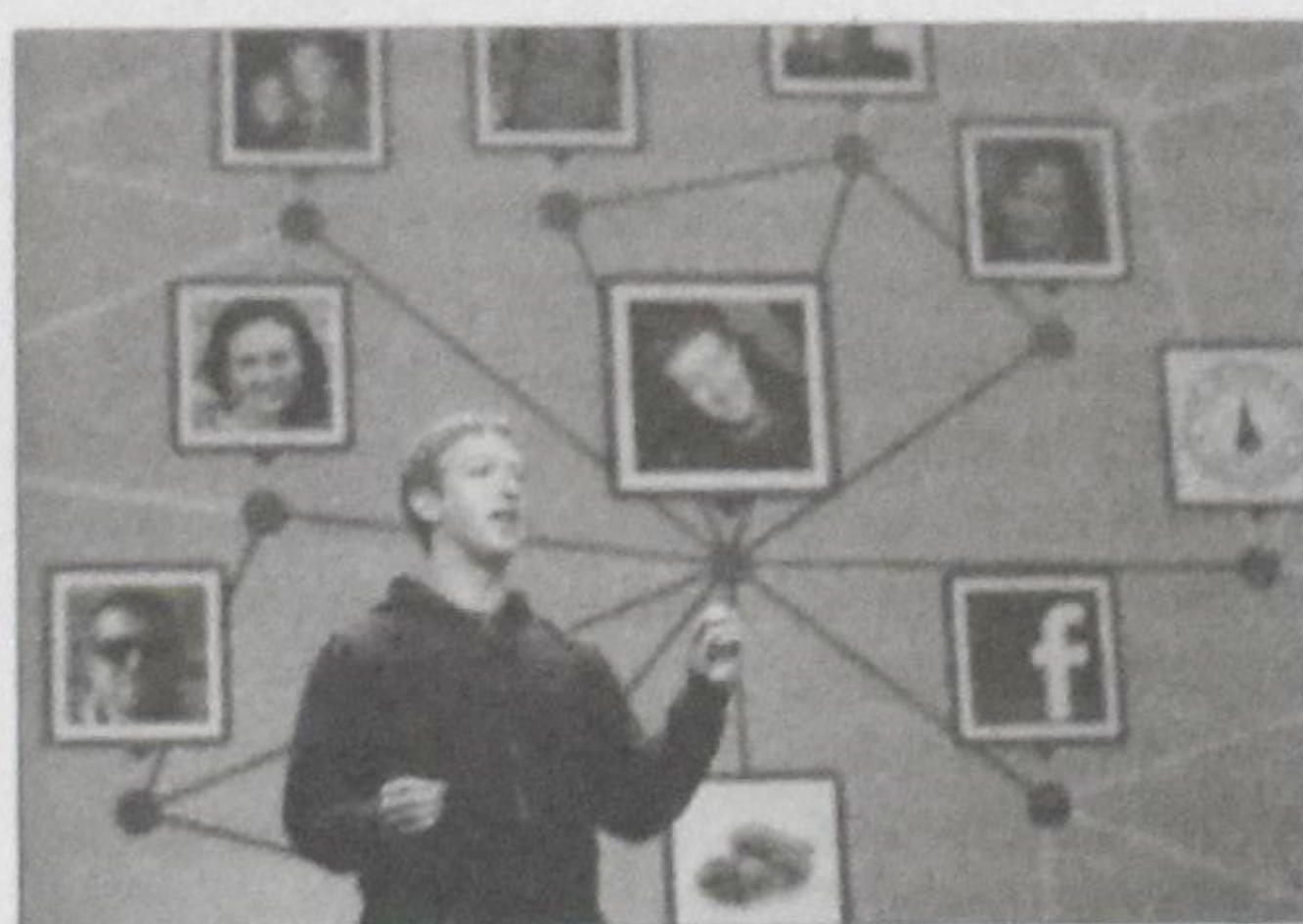


## Facebook politics



Facebook has been around for almost eight years, having been started by a group of enterprising Harvard students. Although it was intended initially for the Harvard student body alone, it was soon expanded to include other Ivy League universities and eventually the entire globe. In a short time it has remade the way we communicate with each other. Speaking for myself, I am now in constant touch, not only with immediate family and former students, but also with elementary and secondary school friends, my grade five teacher, and geographically distant relatives in Cyprus and elsewhere. Every week or so, I receive a friend request from someone who has read my book or shares my interest in sung psalmody.

It is not surprising that Facebook would begin to reshape political life as well. Candidates for public office now have Facebook pages, which supporters are encouraged to "Like" and thereby spread the word to their own expanding list of "friends." Although the internet has been around for a decade and a half and candidates have been posting websites for some years now, Facebook has developed into a distinct medium of communication in its own right. It has radically democratized the communication process by allowing users to reveal as much as they like about themselves in addition to following the activities of well-known personages. Facebook has made all of us potentially famous – to someone at least.



Principal founder Mark Zuckerberg explains how Facebook connects its users. Facebook has remade the way we communicate.

In the past year we have learnt how protesters in Egypt, Iran and Russia have used Facebook to communicate with each other and to co-ordinate their activities. Later in the year, the Occupy Movement spread to cities around the globe, facilitated, not by a common ideology or set of goals, which it largely lacked, but by Blackberries and iPhones, along with the social networking sites which they accessed.

As of last month I had 777 Facebook "friends." (I use inverted commas because, although many are indeed personal friends, others are mere acquaintances or people who follow my writings.) A number of these regularly use Facebook to air their political views to their own "friends." Their views range from aficionados of Ron Paul and Sarah Palin to champions of Barak Obama and the late Jack Layton. (20 of my friends like Palin, while 42 like Obama.) Most of these are utterly predictable in the sorts of articles they link to. Those of a conservative bent will link to the likes of *National Review Online* while those with progressive leanings tend to link to the *Huffington Post* and similar publications.

Perhaps I should not be surprised at this, but it has become increasingly evident that Facebook does little to facilitate genuine dialogue or even healthy debate on the major political issues of the day. People simply put their views out there, as if they were obviously gospel truth with which all people of good will must surely agree. It is the rare person who will call attention to an article in, say, the *Globe and Mail* and ask her "friends" for their input on the matter in the interest of expanding her own store of wisdom. Facebook encourages us, not to exchange ideas with each other, but to put ourselves on display for the world to see. We therefore post our profile photos, the schools we attended, our current employment information and our numerous likes and proclivities, to which our religious and political convictions are implicitly reduced.

There is some irony in the fact that a social networking site intended to facilitate communication has effectively impaired the communicative process on those matters of greatest significance. We may now be in constant touch with people we knew 40 or 50 years ago and haven't seen in nearly as long, but the quality of our communications with each other has not notably improved. In fact, it may have exacerbated the current tendency for people to shout their political propensities at each other rather than to listen, learn and – perish the thought – even change their opinions.

David T. Koyzis teaches politics at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, and has recently completed a first draft of his book on authority, office and the image of God.

## Roots and Wings

Emily Cramer



## The ultimate giver



Right or wrong, gift-giving has become a central part of Christmas here in the wealthy West. With the season just past, I find myself reflecting on giving and receiving and all the madness and joy that go with them. Rampant consumerism is a problem that is catching up with us, a problem worthy of criticism and maybe the stuff of another article. But here in the first weeks of a new year – with the most lavish gift I've ever received beside me – I am absorbed by the positive side of the gift-giving tradition and the One who modeled extravagant giving in the first place. This requires some background and will hopefully help to locate my earlier article on struggling with infertility ("Faith and Fertility," CC Nov. 14).

Two years ago, on a chilly September evening, I discovered I was pregnant for the first time. The bold, blue plus sign was unmistakable, and after months of negative results I was in a state of disbelief. I made my husband run out to buy another test, just in case. A little later that evening, I took out my journal and found myself writing a long prayer – or perhaps a "praise" – at the miracle of it all. Overt praise is not a typical response for me, and one statement still stands out in my memory. I told God I would never again accept the role of cosmic victim after such a profound, inexplicable blessing. At the end of the entry, I wrote out the prenatal hymn that is Psalm 139: "...For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb...."

Psychologists tell us that people with angry or abusive fathers typically struggle with the image of a "father in heaven"; they have trouble separating their negative experience of fatherhood from their concept of the Father God. My relationship with my dad was always positive, and so I never had difficulty with the idea of God as loving. Instead, I perceived my heavenly Father as somewhat distant and aloof, a cosmic character who loved me theoretically but whose hands were literally tied by my sinfulness. I even had a mental picture of a great Michelin man in the heavens, looking down at me with mournfully folded arms, saying, "So sorry, honey, I know you're having a hard time, but there's not much I can do. These were your choices, after all."

My mind may have long since outgrown this absurd perversion of the Father's real power and character in relation to me, but my heart returns to that old rut from time to time,

particularly times of struggle. When conception started to seem problematic and I sensed my total lack of control over it, I feared that rut. Most of all I feared that God – in order to teach me something – would not intervene in this most vulnerable area of my life, and I didn't know if my heart could take it. Visions of the cosmic victim began to loom.

Needless to say, when freedom from that ugly place in my heart was dashed by a miscarriage at nine weeks, it was a dark time. Not only did I suffer from unexpected grief over an invisible loss, I also suffered from an inability to draw close to the God of all comfort. I felt it was impossible to receive comfort from the hand that had so painfully withdrawn this gift.

The Lord promises to work all things for the good of those who love him (Romans 8:28). Sometimes that is a difficult verse: the realization of good might be a long way off, and it might emerge in such a radically different form and context than the original loss that we don't recognize it. And sometimes we don't get to glimpse the fruit of our suffering at all, this side of eternity. But this time, I did.

In the spring 18 months later, I received another plus sign, equally unexpected. It was so unexpected, in fact, that I had been taking a strong prescription medication not compatible with pregnancy. I'm ashamed to say that I responded to the news of this pregnancy with terror: had I damaged my child before he or she had even had a chance at life? It was too late at night to call my doctor, and the information available online did nothing but confirm my fears. I went to bed in tears, so frightened I almost ignored the *Daily Bread* devotional on my nightstand. But something made me pick it up anyway. April 14, 2011. Only a heavenly Father who loves me desperately and has supreme control over all the minuscule plot twists of my story would have nudged Psalm 139:14-16 into that day's reading and would have nudged me to read it. I knew a confirmation when I saw one, the same verses I had written out in my journal a year and a half earlier. I carried those verses close throughout my pregnancy.

And at the beginning of December, my husband and I received our daughter, Clare. Looking at her rosy, wiggling, beautifully formed being I can reflect on the mysterious process of the last two and a half years with renewed faith that my Gift-giver is utterly trustworthy and utterly in control of my life.

Emily Cramer lives in Barrie, Ont. with her husband and teaches in the Liberal Arts department at Georgian College. She is the proud new momma of a baby girl and has turned to Anne Lamott's *Operating Instructions for Levity*.



## Columns

## The Public Square

Harry Antonides



There is no shortage of bad news. We are inundated with news of natural and man-made disasters, wars, terrorism, political, economic and social upheavals on a grand scale. The lines of a famous poem come to mind: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world..."

More than one person has told me that they do not want to follow the news because it is all bad and scary. One problem is that most of the news reporting and commentary in the media is done from a purely secular perspective. But do Christians not bring a different perspective to world events?

## The Great Commission still stands

Is it not true that the Great Commission, Christ's directive to bring the Gospel to the entire world, is still valid today? This commission came with a promise that Christ is *always* with us, even to the very end of the age. Although Christianity is in serious decline in the West, even here good things are happening. There are still many times 7,000 who have not bowed their knees to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). And there are still many instances of faithful obedience to the Great Commission.

Take the amazing mission outreach into South America of the Toronto-based Peoples Church with the leadership of Pastor Charles

## Good news in a world of bad news

Price. In October 2011, the *Living Truth* ministry of this church broadcast a three-part telethon demonstrating how thousands in Guatemala and Columbia are experiencing life-changing conversion, described as follows:

"Millions of Spanish-speaking people are finding new life in Christ, bringing transformation to a society where fear, fatalism and poverty are the common existence... In this part of the world, there is an incredible moving of the Holy Spirit with an immense capacity to bring hope and solutions to the overwhelming problems of poverty, prostitution, drug trafficking, corruption and a general breakdown of moral values."

A major challenge facing new Christians in Latin America is to grow in biblical doctrine and teaching, but many church leaders have had little training. The *Living Truth* is helping to address this problem by translating and spreading Spanish versions of Charles Price's sermons and books.

Carlos Lopez and his wife and three children immigrated to Canada from Colombia, and were impressed with Price's preaching when they started attending the Peoples Church. Providentially, Carlos came to the

Peoples Church right at the time the *Living Truth* staff was turning their attention to the Spanish speaking world, and he is now busy preparing their programs in Spanish with the vision of expanding into mainstream TV across 22 countries in Latin America.

## Transformation and forgiveness

Columbia has long had a reputation of being one of the most dangerous countries in the world. It is notorious for its drug cartels, guerrilla warfare, paramilitaries, ransom kidnappings and violence, which bring widespread poverty and despair. But since 2004, there has been a resurgence of Christianity with hundreds of thousands longing to hear the truth of the *Bible*. Here is a case of fields that are ripe for the harvest. *Living Truth* reports:

"Out of the darkness that has blanketed Columbia for decades, the Gospel is now preached without compromise, and many are experiencing the very real and transforming power of Christ in their lives."

People who have lived lives of squalor and desperation are discovering that there is a way of escaping their bondage. One such person is Alba Nubia, who ended up on the streets, broken in body and mind and considering suicide. It was at this low point that Nubia was introduced to Christ. That marked the beginning of a long process of recovery. She now operates a safe home for women and their children in Bogota,

making grateful use of the Spanish *Living Truth* material.

Russel Stendal is a pilot and survivor of a brutal kidnapping by Marxist guerrillas in Columbia. They held him for five months in 1983, tied to a tree with a rope around his neck. After his release, Stendal became a witness of the Good News to the same people who had captured him. He is now broadcasting the *Living Truth* programs on 16 radio stations.

Eber Medina grew up in the poverty of a mining town in Columbia, where life was cheap and guns plentiful. He became a brutal enforcer and killer, but when confronted with the Gospel, he repented and became a witness of God's mercy and power.

These stories are reminders that amidst all the bad news in the world, the Good News of the Gospel is renewing hearts, lives and cultures, even in the most unlikely places. Therefore, we need not cower in fear when we see so much going wrong in the world. Instead we may rejoice in the fact that Christ is Lord and his Kingdom is coming.

The information in this article is taken from the *Living Truth's* three-part series, "Hope for Latin America." See [www.livingtruth.ca](http://www.livingtruth.ca).

Harry Antonides ([hantonides@sympatico.ca](mailto:hantonides@sympatico.ca)) retired as director of the former Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

## Country Living

Meindert Vander Galien



What a pleasant surprise I had when the editor of an agricultural publication (*Farmers Forum*) called me with the news that 16 school children had written letters to him in response to my column on food waste (*CC Oct. 10*). He was "tickled pink" that a grade 3 and 4 class at an Amprior area school (west of Ottawa) had read and discussed my column, and that so many had responded with letters.

In a cover letter to the editor, the teacher explained that the class was studying plants and habitats and the things that threaten them like global warming, and that a parent had sent in my food waste article. *Farmers Forum* seldom gets that many letters in one month, and never from nine and ten year olds. The editor said he would publish eight letters in the December issue.

My column stated that roughly one third of the food produced in the world for human consumption every year – approximately 1.3 billion tonnes – gets lost or wasted, and that food losses are most prominent in developing countries due to poor infrastructure and food waste is more of a problem in industrialized countries. (See the full column for

more details).

In their letters, some of the students specifically mentioned their own eating habits and the fact that they sometimes waste food in school lunches. Others focused on some bigger picture issues. It's good to know what kids think about waste and what they plan to do about it. Here are some excerpts from their letters, all of which begin with "Our class read Meindert van der Galien's column on food waste."

## What kids think about waste

From Russell: I think at least half the people on earth should stop wasting food because all the rotting food causes greenhouse gases which cause global warming. And not only that, but all the trouble and pollution making bags and getting food to the store is for nothing if you waste it. You can stop wasting food by buying just the right amount of food from the store.

From Liam: I think when people waste food they're wasting money and energy. Instead you should compost and recycle. I admit I waste my apple but I am working hard to eat all of it.

From Quinn: I think people should stop wasting food because all the energy people put into picking apples and trucking them to the stores. Most kids eat half the apple. If you grow your own food it is better because it doesn't waste fuel. It doesn't put out exhaust, which prevents global warming. If you can't finish your lunch take it home. Eat it at home so you won't waste food.

From James: I think that whatever shape or size or colour of the food Wal-Mart or any other store should still sell the food to people so they can still eat it no matter what. Restaurants should serve smaller amounts because some people on earth waste a lot of food and they think they can eat it but can't.

From Madison: I think it is wrong to

waste food because when people throw things out landfills emit deadly greenhouse gases that make the world hotter. I think people need to have some natural disasters so they have to eat everything or they don't waste as much.

From Jake: I think that we should not buy certain food if we aren't going to eat it and don't eat junk food because it's not healthy. You could waste it like black licorice and if you don't like red licorice don't waste food if you aren't going to like it.

From Drake: I think that we don't ask for as much food, if you don't eat all of the meal you normally ask for. If you waste some of your meal you're wasting the energy that was used to ship the food to the grocery stores. The gas that comes out of the truck creates greenhouse gasses. That is bad for the earth. It makes global warming. Even I waste some of my lunch at school so I will ask my mom to send me less food to school.

From Jacob: Sometimes I waste my lunch because I run out of time. A thing I could do is bring it home and finish it there.

Meindert van der Galien is a Renfrew, Ontario, farmer who enjoys being in the great outdoors.



Grade 3 and 4 students wrote letters expressing their opinions on food waste.



## Column

## Life Stories

Anita Brinkman

## James Hunt



James Hunt has had a long and varied journey, spanning three continents, several careers, and many changes. From childhood in South Africa, he has followed God's leading to Belleville, Ontario, where he is the Executive Director of UCB Canada, a network of Christian radio stations whose work is "Changing lives for good." Speaking with Hunt, it is easy to see his passion for people and for the message of the Gospel; that's a good combination for someone who sees radio and other media as tools for reaching people with God's Word. "We often get asked," he says, "Is UCB a ministry for Christians or non-Christians?" I tell them it's for people."

Hunt grew up on a farm near Howick, Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, where he spent his free time fishing, shooting, and playing with his friends. His family didn't go to church, but a friend told Hunt about the Lord. Though this friend "wasn't the best example" in lifestyle, Hunt became interested in his faith, and, at 14, went to his high school religion teacher. She spoke with him, listened to his questions, and, the same day during a lunch break, she led him to the Lord. "I knew right then there was a complete change in my life," says Hunt.

After high school, Hunt was conscripted into the army for two years. "This was during the apartheid era," Hunt recalls; "I really saw God's hand on my life there. I grew up on a farm, so my mates [friends] were Zulu-speaking black people. In the military, I was an interpreter. Because I understood the culture and the people, I was in a really unique situation." This cultural knowledge was to prove useful again later in his life. After university, Hunt spent eight or nine

years teaching in a high school, then became a consultant for "all sorts of companies" including "factories [and] service companies."

In 1996, he made a major move, taking his wife and family to live in the United Kingdom. "We went to the U.K. with six suitcases, and two kids, four and two years old, and £400 ... After the coach dropped us off, I thought, 'God, you'll have to come through for us.'" For the first two weeks they stayed with Hunt's mom, who had moved to the U.K. following a divorce, then Hunt and his wife found jobs and a house. "God was faithful where he called us," reflects Hunt. Using skills he had learned in his work in South Africa and working in London for a few years, Hunt continued to work as a consultant with airlines, pharmaceutical companies, and other businesses. At the same time, he was pastoring a church in the U.K., a natural outworking of his desire to share the message of salvation which had so transformed his life. "When I became a Christian," Hunt shares, "I knew I was headed for full-time ministry somewhere."

It was during this time that his relationship with UCB started. UCB U.K. asked Hunt if he would help them with some challenges they were facing, and he took on the work. The celebrity and excitement of work in media was never a draw for Hunt. "Media never played a big part in my life," he says, recalling his youth on the farm. "I'm passionate about extending God's kingdom — media is just a vehicle. The purpose is the motivating factor: 'How do we present the undiluted Gospel to people?' ... Part of the reason we use radio is that it's such an intimate medium. Where else can you reach people in prison, or driving truck ... or who can't sleep, or depressed teenagers? This reaches all people all the time."

To people interested in getting into the Christian media industry, Hunt has this advice: Make it excellent. "Just because it's

Christian doesn't mean people will listen. It has to be professional quality to compete for people's attention ... It can't be cheesy or substandard — that seems to sometimes be excused just because it's Christian." More importantly, be committed to walking with the Lord, and have a passion for people. "You have to be connected to why we do what we do."

His intense desire to reach people for Christ, and his gifts as a leader soon led to Hunt being asked to serve on the UCB U.K. board of directors and eventually as Vice president of Corporate Development for UCB International. Then, in 2006, UCB Canada asked the Hunts if they would consider coming to Canada. By this time, the two- and four-year-old children who had arrived in the U.K. had grown into teenagers. Wanting to teach them to make godly decisions, Hunt and his wife involved them in the decision. They had been feeling that God was preparing them for something different. "It didn't make the emotional side any easier, but we were prepared," Hunt says. Canada is now 'home' to the Hunts, who are about to get their Canadian citizenship. "We feel it's where God wants us ... God's been there, and [our children] were able to connect with good friends at a very impressionable time in their lives."

There have been other challenges. Three years ago, Hunt was diagnosed with cancer. It was a difficult time for his family, just settling into a new country. "It was an unexpected change," he says reflectively, "But we've really seen God's hand in that. It was such a miracle — they weren't looking for anything, but they found a spot on my kidney and were able to remove my kidney before it metastasized." Then last year, doctors found something in his remaining kidney. The Hunts and their friends "got a lot of people to pray," and in the next check-up, "They found nothing. When the specialist went to try and explain he did not know what to say. It was obviously very awkward for him — they could find it on the old tests, but not on the new." However it turned out, it would have been a reminder that "God is always on the throne; He can do what he wants — and, praise God, I'm here to tell the story," smiles Hunt. The many people whose lives have been touched and changed by the ministry of UCB would agree: praise God indeed.

Anita Brinkman is a part-time tutor and freelance writer from Chatham, Ont. With this series, she hopes to demonstrate that every life has stories worth preserving and sharing.



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| <div>Anniversary<div>1951                      December 20                      2011<br/>Groningen, Gr.                      Belleville, Ont.<br/><br/>As for me and my house,<br/>we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24,15b<br/><br/><b>HENK AND EMY SCHUILENBERG</b><br/><br/>We thank God for <b>60 Years of Blessings</b><br/>and wonderful memories.<br/><br/>Much love and congratulations from your children:<br/>Helen, Sue, Johanna, Bill, Sylvia &amp; Mike;<br/>all our spouses, 18 grandchildren,<br/>and 21 great-grandchildren!<br/><br/>A family celebration was held in their honour.<br/><br/>Best wishes may be sent to<br/>H. Schuilenberg<br/>208 - 7 Aldersgate Drive<br/>Belleville ON K8P 4W9</div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  | <div>Obituaries<div><div><div>30 November 1925 - 1 January 2012<br/>Ulrum, Groningen                      Ancaster, Ontario<br/><br/><b>FROUWKJE (FREDA) VISSER (nee Wolters)</b><br/><br/>At the beginning of a New Year the Lord and Saviour, Jesus, mercifully called Frouwkje to himself.<br/><br/>The family counts it God's special blessing that they could all surround Frouwkje and pray together as she peacefully passed away. Frouwkje will be dearly remembered by her husband Wieger of 62 years, sons Ed (Jean) and Wayne (Carmen), grandchildren Aaron (Meghan), Jason (Rowan), Carson and Renessa, great-grandchildren Micah and Elizabeth, siblings Gonda, Aly, Lammert in the Netherlands, brother-in-law Bill (Effie), nephew Scott (Sharon) and exceptional family friend Coby Lammers.<br/><br/>Frouwkje will be remembered as an active participant in her church choir and Friendship Club and for her special touch with gardening. Both Frouwkje and Wieger overcame significant challenges after their immigration to Canada – events that shaped Frouwkje's tenacity and will to overcome. Yet the family thanks God alone for delivering Frouwkje from her final struggles into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.<br/><br/>The family deeply appreciates the excellent help Frouwkje received in her last years at The Meadows Long Term care facility in Ancaster. Nurses, staff and physicians are all thanked for their care.<br/><br/>Our God is a God who saves! The Sovereign Lord rescues us from death.<br/>Psalms 68:20<br/><br/>The funeral service was held on Wednesday, January 4th 2012 at the Mount Hamilton CRC in Hamilton, Ontario.<br/><br/>Correspondence to: Wieger Visser<br/>31 Northern Breeze, Mount Hope ON L0R 1W0</div></div></div></div> |  |
| <div>Obituary<div><b>GONNY OEGEMA (nee DeVries)</b><br/><br/>Be faithful even unto the point of death.<br/>And I will give you the crown of life. Revelations 2:10<br/><br/>August 7, 1932 (Netherlands) to December 15, 2011 (Ottawa)<br/><br/>After 79 years of a God-directed life, Gonny passed away peacefully at home surrounded by family.<br/><br/>Beloved and dedicated wife of John for 57 years.<br/>Precious mother of Ellen (John), Bart (Lori), John (Anneke), Rick (Gamble) and Peter.<br/>Loved grandmother to Greg (Aileen), Janice, Jennifer (Nick), Lesley-Anne (Tyler), Bart (Kristin), Nick, Tim, Alida, Brittany, Kristopher and Cory.<br/>Great-grandmother to Bianca and Dirk.<br/>Sister of John DeVries (Wil), Janke Oevering (Simon), George DeVries (Gert) Sister-in-law of Grace (John +). Will be missed by many nieces and nephews.<br/><br/>Gonny loved life, and together with John, she has left all of us a legacy of faith and love.<br/><br/>Donations in Gonny's memory can be made to The Canadian Cancer Society or to World Vision Canada.<br/><br/>Correspondence to John Oegema<br/>118 - 6 Meridian Place, Ottawa ON K2G 6L9</div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  | <div>House for Rent<div>Newer 2 bedroom <b>bungalow</b>, Niagara area – Fonthill, Ontario.<br/>\$1200, per mth. plus util. no pets. 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| <div>Personal<div>Female, living in Ontario, in her mid fifties, seeking to correspond with a Christian male for friendship and open to the possibilities of a long term relationship. I am energetic, healthy, outgoing and have a positive outlook on life. My Christian faith walk is important to me. Should you be interested to begin a new relationship please respond to:<br/><b>Christian Courier File # 2774</b><br/><b>2 Aiken St. St. Catharines ON L2N 1V8</b></div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  | <div>Holiday accomodation in Holland<div>with vehicle rentals and tours.<br/><b>www.chestnutlane.nl</b><br/><br/><br/>See our advertisers for flights and all your vacation plans.</div></div>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |
| <div>Job Opportunitites<div><div><b>PASTOR</b><br/>Kingston, Ontario's<br/><b>Westside Fellowship CRC</b><br/><br/>is a small church with a big heart in an historic university city of 117,000 on the shores of Lake Ontario. We are seeking a pastor who relates well to all ages, and will help us grow as a church through using his or her gifts of empowering leadership, engaging preaching and effective worship planning. The new pastor will help renew our educational ministry and will support our efforts to reach out to our community.<br/><br/>For further information, or to submit a pastoral profile please email: <a href="mailto:admin@wfcrc.ca">admin@wfcrc.ca</a><br/><br/>On our website at <a href="http://christiancourier.ca">christiancourier.ca</a><br/>&gt; Recently run job ads<br/>&gt; Upload photos and ads by clicking on the classified link.<br/>&gt; Give feedback or join the conversation on Facebook.</div><div><b>Executive Director</b><br/>Are you personable, ennergetic and love working with youth?<br/><b>Duties and Responsibilities</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Responsible for the leadership and growth of YIC</li><li>• Develop, schedule and oversee programs</li><li>• Build relationships within the community</li><li>• Develop fundraising opportunities</li></ul><b>Requirements</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Post secoondary educationn in an area pertaining to Christian ministry and/or youth work</li><li>• Willingness to lead by example and able to build relationships with youth</li><li>• Be sensitive and alert to their physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual needs</li><li>• Able to schedule and supervise volunteers to assist with YIC programs</li></ul><br/>This is a conntact position for 25hours/weeek<br/>Email cover letter and resume to <a href="mailto:info@youthimpactcentre.com">info@youthimpactcentre.com</a></div><div><b>Fellowship CRC in Brighton, Ontario</b><br/>a growing and dynamic church of 500+ is seeking a<br/><b>Worship Coordinator.</b><br/><br/>The successful applicant of this part time position would help organize our talented musicians and praise teams, provide leadership and meet with the pastors and worship committee to plan blended worship services and occasionally lead in the ministry of music. Ideal candidate would be able to play piano, guitar or organ.<br/><br/>Please contact Tony Jeronimus 613-475-4455<br/>or <a href="mailto:tonyj@peakltd.ca">tonyj@peakltd.ca</a>.</div><div><b>Fellowship CRC in Brighton, Ontario</b><br/>a growing and dynamic church of 500+, is seeking a<br/><b>Congregational Care Coordinator.</b><br/><br/>This part time position would be filled by someone who can guide our Congregational Care Team and our Small Groups leaders, encourage formation of new Small Groups, inspire inter-generational ministry, co-ordinate with our pastors to improve member care, and may be asked to-participate in some worship services.<br/><br/>Please contact Roxanne Ewing <a href="mailto:drgmewing@live.com">drgmewing@live.com</a>.</div><div></div></div></div> |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |  |



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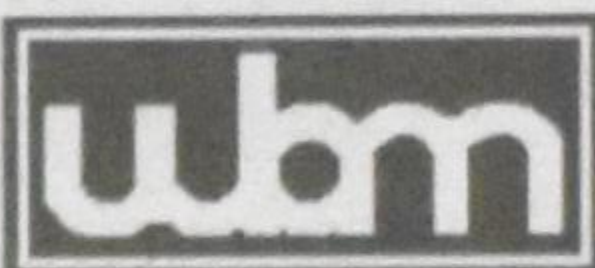
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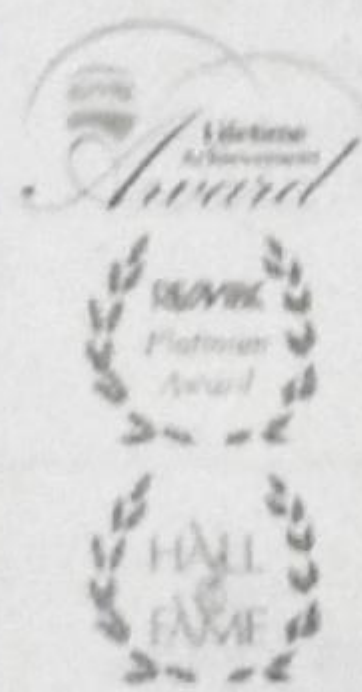
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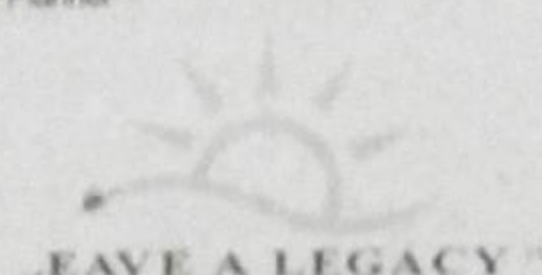
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- Jan 15** Dutch Service will be held in the Ancaster Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. John Veenstra will be preaching. DVDs are available.
- Jan 21** The Psalm Project concert: Light Korean Presbyterian Church, Mississauga at 7:30 p.m. See article pg. 20.
- Jan 22** Worship with the The Psalm Project: Willowdale CRC at 10:00 a.m., Mountainview CRC (Grimsby) at 5:00 p.m.
- Jan 23** The Psalm Project at Redeemer University College: Workshop at 11 a.m., Concert at 7:30 p.m.
- Jan 24** The Psalm Project concert: First London CRC at 7:30 p.m.
- Feb 17-19** Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend. St. Catharines, ON Register at [reformedme.org](http://reformedme.org)
- Feb 18-20** Ottewell CRC, Edmonton, AB, will DV celebrate 50 years of God's grace and faithfulness. Visit: [ottewellchurch.com](http://ottewellchurch.com)
- Apr 20-22** Reformed Marriage Encounter Weekend. London, ON Register at [reformedme.org](http://reformedme.org)

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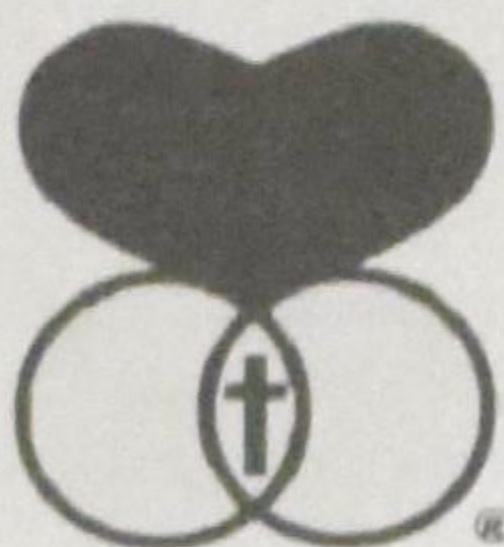
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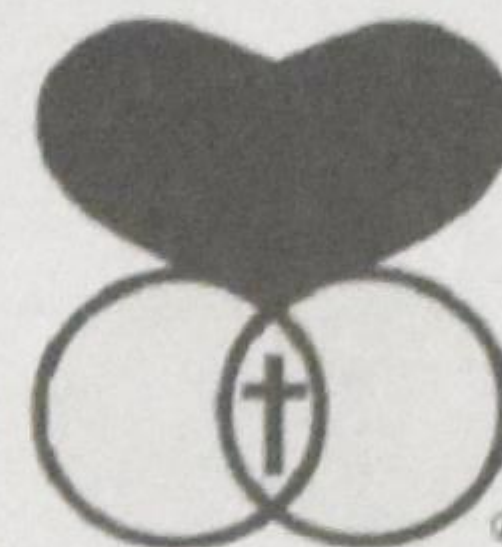
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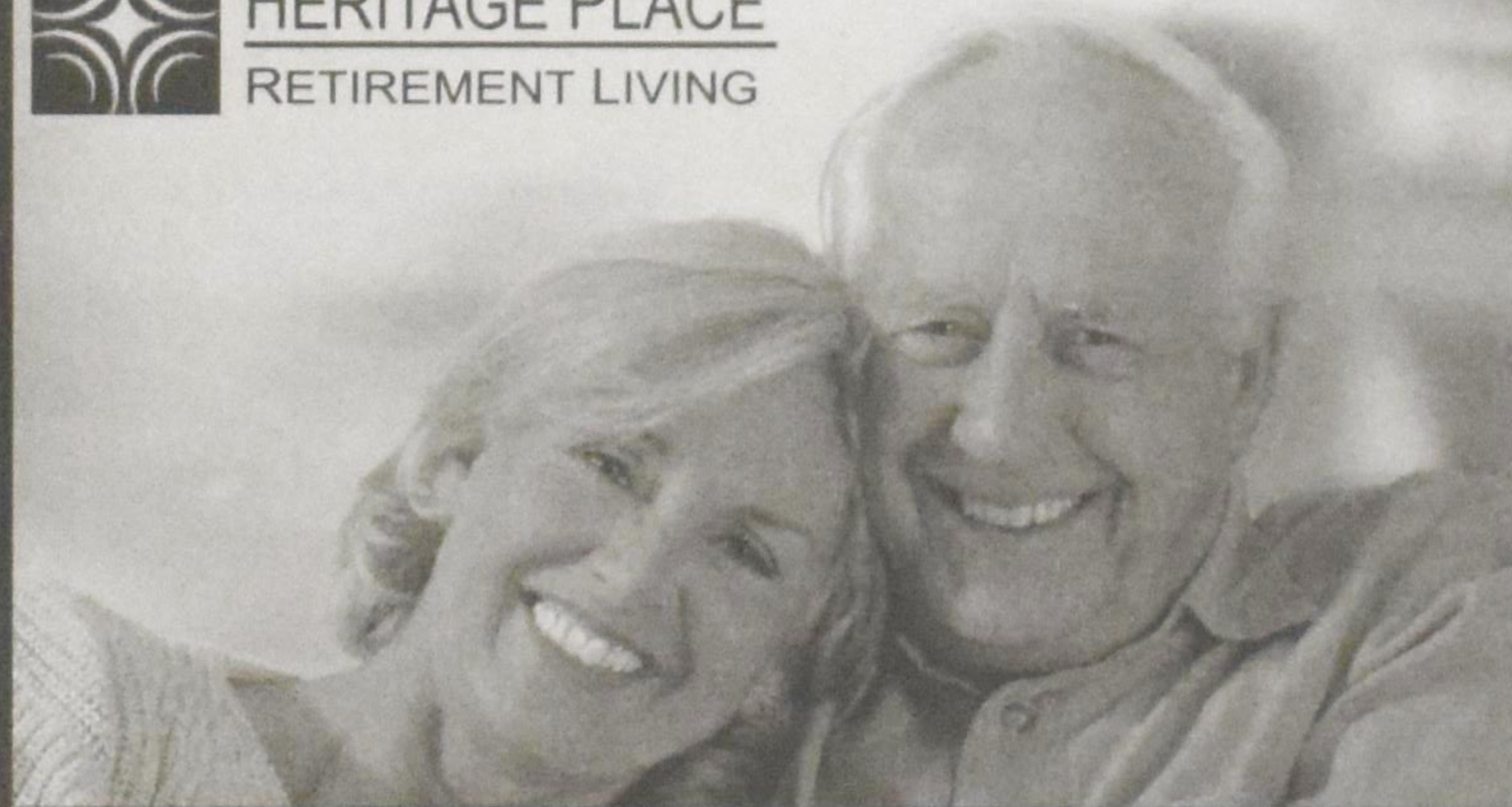
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## News

## Hamilton congregation receives surprise visit by Robin Mark

Monica deRegt

A congregation in Hamilton, Ont., was recently blessed by a surprise visit from well-known recording artist Robin Mark.

On Sunday, Nov. 20, Mark, who is known for song such as "Jesus, All for Jesus" and "Days of Elijah," joined the worship team of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church to help lead worship and teach the congregation some new songs during their regular Sunday morning service.

The plan to include Mark in the worship service was kept strictly confidential to avoid attracting unmanageable crowds. Other than the two pastors, no one from the congregation was made aware of the plan during the months leading up to Mark's visit.

Rev. Henry Kranenburg, lead pastor of Immanuel CRC, explained that it was also very important to keep the service focused on worship. He also acknowledged that Robin Mark's music has played a significant role in Immanuel CRC's worship services for many years.

"Open knowledge could mean that we simply would not have room for the many that might have come specifically for that reason," he explained.

"An important element for me was wanting to keep it 'our' worship and not have it be a Robin Mark event, and so we planned the liturgy that way, both in its opening and in its structure. That was also why we wanted our music team to play with Robin, which he was very open to. Worship is about God and that is who we would be there for," Kranenburg stated.

Claiming to be a mediocre musician himself, Mark was enthusiastic about the opportunity to play with local musicians and stated that he is always blessed by the experience.

"I believe it is important for people to learn first how to serve God and use their gifts in their local church," he said. "When I come to North America, I love to join the very talented musicians God has placed in the local churches."

After singing some of his more well-known songs, Mark shared a few words with the congregation about his experience as a worship songwriter and the motivation behind some of the lyrics in his songs. While introducing a new song from his recently released album, *Fly*, he explained his desire that his music would first and foremost reflect his longing to worship God.

"True worship song lyrics must come from the heart of a worshipper," he emphasized.

### Absolute secrecy

Some of the members of the worship team were not even told about Mark's involvement until they arrived for practice at 8 a.m. One of the singers, Audrey Benjamins, said that while she felt really nervous and inadequate at first, she quickly realized that the focus of the service had not changed and that they were all there for the same thing, to worship God.

"My purpose for being up there didn't change. I came prepared to worship, and that's what we did. Robin Mark enhanced that," she commented. She also expressed a keen appreciation for Mark's obvious gift of leading worship, stating it was a blessing to sing alongside of him.

One the pastors, Rev. Mark Knetsch, also participated in leading worship. As part of the pastoral staff who planned the service, Knetsch felt that the deliberate decision to ensure Mark's celebrity-type status wouldn't distract the congregation paid off.

"Our liturgy is designed to dialogue with God," explained Rev. Knetsch. "I think the theological reflection was 'caught' by the congregation. The worship experience that morning allowed for a fresh expression for some."

When the service ended, several members of the congregation waited for a chance to meet Mark, who was more than welcoming and engaged people young and old in conversation about worship and his music. Many expressed how much his music has been a blessing and a ministry in their lives, a tribute for which Mark himself gives all the glory to God.

Mark was in southern Ontario for a Promise Keepers convention and was a guest of Rick Verkerk, National Manager for Promise Keepers and member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church. He makes his home in Belfast, Ireland.

*Monica deRegt is a freelance writer and stay-at-home mom who lives in Hamilton with her husband and three children. She is a member of Immanuel CRC and is a news correspondent for The Banner magazine.*



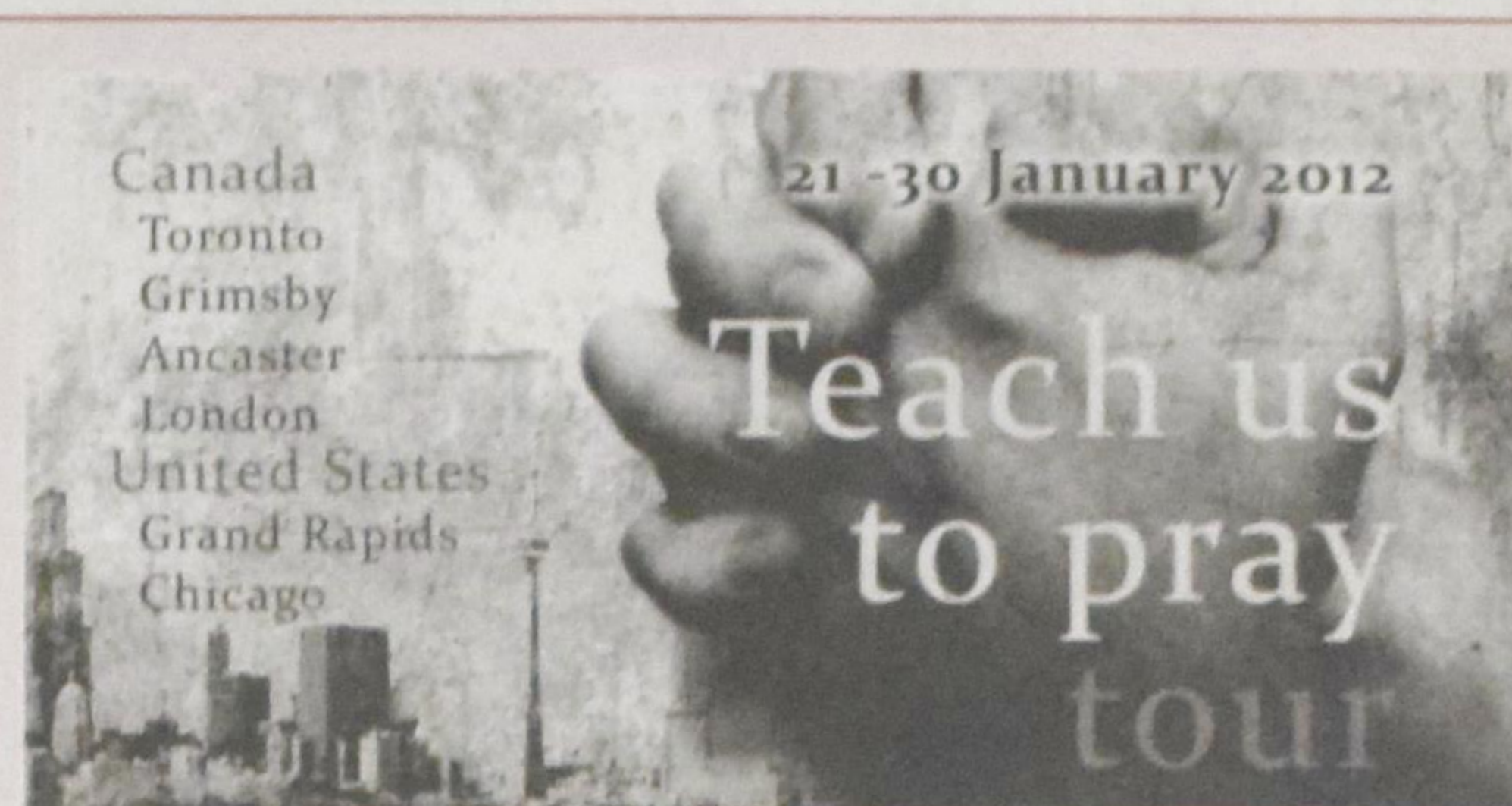
PHOTOS BY MONICA DEREGT



Robin Mark joined Immanuel's worship team to lead the congregation.



Robin Mark with Immanuel CRC member and fan, Sharon VanDokkumburg.



## Psalm Project tour comes to Canada and the U.S.

Wendy de Jong

The Psalm Project's mission is to reintroduce the Genevan Psalms to a new generation of the church. This group from The Netherlands is coming to Southern Ontario, Michigan and Illinois at the end of January 2012. They will lead worship services, lead a workshop at Redeemer University College, give several concerts and participate in the Calvin Symposium of Worship.

The Genevan Psalter has historically been the backbone of the Reformed church's sung repertoire. However, musical tones and styles change over the centuries and the Genevan Psalms have for the most part been relegated to occasional use in churches today. The purpose of The Psalm Project tour is to revive psalm-singing by introducing these psalms – with their theological depths of prayer, lament and praise – re-tooled in a contemporary style with piano, guitar, strings and drums.

The tour's name, "Teach us to pray," speaks to the underlying motive for the Psalm Project's music. In a context where the psalms have been mostly neglected, The Psalm Project hopes to remind us of our need to pray in ways directly inspired by the Bible.

The Psalm Project is made up of young professional musicians whose sensibilities have been formed by a lively gospel, rock and Christian contemporary music scene in the Netherlands. Some are or have been lead singers for gospel choirs, and another is a sought-after producer, arranger, composer and instrumentalist. They also include a pianist who keeps busy by accompanying all sorts of concerts and worship services, a former gospel choir director, a guitarist/song writer and a drummer who runs a recording studio. Several Psalm Project musicians have their own websites, and, between them, have contributed to hundreds of CDs. The remarkable thing is that these successful musicians are contributing freely to The Psalm Project's "Teach us to pray" tour.

### The Psalm Project - Ontario "Teach Us To Pray Tour"

|                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>January 21: 7:30 p.m.</b><br>Light Korean Presbyterian Church<br>6965 Professional Court,<br>Mississauga, Ontario   | <b>January 23: 11 a.m.</b><br><b>Workshop</b><br>'Genevan Psalter Update'<br>450 years after John Calvin<br>Redeemer College, |
| <b>January 22: 10:00 a.m.</b><br>Participating in service<br>Willowdale CRC<br>70 Hilda Avenue,<br>Willowdale, Ontario | <b>Concert Teach Us To Pray</b><br>7:30 p.m.<br>Redeemer College<br>777 Garner Road East,<br>Ancaster, Ontario                |
| <b>January 22: 5 p.m.</b><br>Participating in service<br>Mountainview CRC<br>290 Main Street East,<br>Grimsby, Ontario | <b>January 24: 7:30 p.m.</b><br>The Psalm Project concert<br>First London CRC<br>531 Talbot Street<br>London, Ontario N6A 2S5 |

Visit [thepsalmproject.com](http://thepsalmproject.com) or [worshipanew.net](http://worshipanew.net) for all tour dates and information or to listen to samples of **Psalms** or order CDs.



Become friends with The Psalm Project on facebook and **download free mp3s.**